

THE CARLETON Miscellany

"Contemporary Chronicles"

by *John Dos Passos*

"Solomon's House"

—A Lecture on the Occasion of
the 300th Anniversary of the Royal
Society of London, by *Charles C.
Gillispie*.

FRANCIS BERRY

PHILIP BOOTH

ROBERT GRANT BURNS

VERLIN CASSILL

THOM GUNN

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Drawings by CCW and ERW III

THE CARLETON MISCELLANY, Volume II, Number 2, Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota. Published by Carleton College.

The Carleton Miscellany is published in Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. Rates are as follows: 90c a copy; \$3.50 a year, \$6.00 for two years. It is distributed to newstands and bookstores by B. DeBoer, 103 Beverly Rd., Bloomfield, N. J. Manuscripts are submitted at the author's risk; further, they will not be returned unless they are accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

A new book by JOHN DOS PASSOS, entitled *Mid Century*, has just been published.

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VERLIN CASSILL has a new novel coming out in May, called *Clem Anderson*. It will be published by Andersonday.

THOM GUNN: "I was born at Gravesend, England, in 1929. I came to America in 1954 and have stayed around ever since. I teach at Berkeley as an acting instructor, and if people say I'm an academic poet well to hell with it I'll be an academic poet." He has published two books, *Fighting Terms*, 1954, and *The Sense of Movement*, 1957.

JOHN LUCAS, an old editor of *Furioso* now living in Rome, will be a visiting professor of English at Carleton for the year 1961-62.

BARRY SPACKS teaches at M.I.T. His work has appeared in a variety of magazines.

CHRISTOPHER WATERS teaches French at Carleton. Verse by him appeared in an earlier issue of *The Miscellany*.

TRACY THOMPSON submits all his work in hotel envelopes. He is working for an M.A. at San Francisco State College, has appeared in *The Massachusetts Review*, *The Antioch Review* and other magazines.

DAVID YOUNG, a Carleton graduate, is finishing up his Ph.D. at Yale.

(Continued on page 104)



SOLOMON'S HOUSE

*A lecture before Carleton College on 28 November, 1960
the 300th Anniversary of the founding of the Royal Society
of London*

By CHARLES COULSTON GILLISPIE

1660 was the year of the Restoration in London. Christopher Wren was Professor of Astronomy at Gresham College, and a circle of friends would often hear him. After the lecture on 28 November, the group withdrew (in the words of the old minute book) "for mutual converse, where among other matters that were discussed of, something was offered about a design of founding a College for the Promoting of Physico-Mathematical Learning." Thus was founded the Royal Society of London for Promoting Natural Knowledge—three hundred years ago today. That is not very long. Harvard College is older than the first durable scientific society. I saw a tree a few months ago near Charleston, a live oak which is nine hundred years old, a living organism three times as old as science and older, therefore, than time—as science uses time, anyway, which is as a dimension of motion rather than as an order of historical events or personal experiences.

One of the founders, John Wilkins, had published a book in 1648. It explains Galileo's dynamics to the English, and tells how

the quantity of motion in falling bodies is to be measured as a changing ratio between geometric lengths of time and distance. Galileo had published the law of falling bodies in 1633, the earliest mathematical law of matter in motion. That is what classical physics has always been about. Thus the founders of the Royal Society were themselves of the first generation who had the opportunity of understanding science as we know it. They were not ones to look to the past. They looked to the future and believed in novelty in learning. They believed with a cheerful sobriety, and also with a sense of the universality of learning, and (like Francis Bacon who inspired them) they would have taken special joy at the prospect of their Tercentenary being celebrated so deep in the New World, here in a New Atlantis of the State of Minnesota, and among a generation which must find its own way to develop science and to live with it, and to be serious and cheerful.

What, then, do we celebrate? The events themselves are clear enough, but not the difference they made. Indeed, on the face of it they seem almost trivial. They concern an obscure group, obscure and small. Present—so reads the record—were Lord Brouncker, Mr. Boyle, Mr. Bruce, Sir Robert Moray, Sir Paul Neile, Dr. Wilkins, Dr. Goddard, Dr. Petty, Mr. Ball, Mr. Rooke, Mr. Wren, and Mr. Hill. No one of them yet was famous. Brouncker was an Irish nobleman with a hobby in mathematics. He became charter president. Boyle was the second son of the Earl of Cork, another Irishman and not yet known for chemistry or theology. Moray was a soldier of fortune, dashing and loyal to the house of Stuart, with a taste for natural history and an enthusiasm for comets. William Petty became a founder of economics rather than of natural science. He had a medical degree, and once at Oxford set out to dissect a serving girl hanged for theft, only to have her come alive under the scalpel. The incision healed, but she never lost a crook in the neck. Jonathan Goddard was also a doctor, Cromwell's personal physician and son-in-law. Wilkins was the moving spirit. He had been Warden of Wadham College under Cromwell, and became a Bishop under Charles

II. One recognizes the name of Christopher Wren. The astronomy lecturer was indeed the future architect of St. Paul's. Architecture was closer then to astronomy in its preoccupation with preserving, amidst an infinite universe, some relation between man and space in domings and ellipsoids, some sense of man the measure.

The others have left mainly records of their presence. Their petition found favor with the King, who granted everything but what they most needed—money. In literary London the Royal Society found both favor and disfavor. Swift's attitude pre-figured Bernard Shaw's—both were self-insufficient moralists who resented the indifference of science to the word, to the message and the word, and its imperviousness to satire. It is the satirist who looks foolish, after all, if he waxes clever over the way the world is made. Charles II was more prudent and good-natured. He was a sardonic patron, but he only teased about the more absurd experiments and the slow progress in the mastery of nature. Others found amusement in attendance on the virtuosi: Dryden, Pepys, and Evelyn were warm and cordial, and took the prospect of science in good part.

One may take the liberty on an anniversary to think of the relations of science to the times. For the times were not such three hundred years ago as to give heart to discriminating persons. No man might trust the restored King. Much less might any woman. The crown was his in receivership from the bankruptcy of better causes. After twenty years of civil war, Puritanism, the great moral hope of the century, had issued in a tyranny helpless to graduate into order. It had taken the army to buy domestic peace, at the price of foregoing principles. By what right of worth would Restoration England stand against the gathering might of Louis XIV, at this, the most brilliant moment of French history, when all Europe inclined to France?

Looking back on their immediate past, the founders of the Royal Society had little cause for confidence. Their meetings had begun informally as early as 1645, in what Boyle in good Epicurean fashion called an "invisible college." Oxford became

the headquarters during Cromwell's time. Young men found posts there when old Royalist dons were purged. Back in London meetings ceased for fear of soldiers. Nor did the members think to cure these civil and religious discontents by science. On the contrary, their contemporary historian, Thomas Sprat, tells how their constitution expressly forbade such divisive topics:

To have been always tossing about some Theological question, would have been, to have made that their private diversion, the excess of which they themselves disliked in the publick; To have been eternally musing on Civil Business, and the distresses of their country, was too melancholy a reflection; It was Nature alone, which could pleasantly entertain them in that estate. The contemplation of that, draws our minds off from the past, or present misfortunes, and makes them conquerors over things, in the greatest human unhappiness:—while consideration of Men, and Humane affairs, may affect us with a thousand various disquiets: that never separates us into Mortal *Factions*: that gives us room to differ, without animosity; and permits us, to raise contrary imaginations upon it, without any danger of a Civil War.

We are not, therefore, to see in the founders of the Royal Society the pre-figuration of a pseudo-scientific cult, purporting to correct the contingency of the human condition in a social projection of science. Theirs was rather an escape from politics into some purer realm of benevolence and truth. Their mood was almost separatist.

What, then, are we to make of science in its social aspect? For that is precisely what creation of a Society involved. And it must at once be confessed that the actual record of work done is no more impressive than the roster of the early names. "This noble design of experiments," says Sprat, alluding to the intention to install apparatus, to multiply observations, to collect particulars—mature men naively giving themselves over to the tiny chores so relentlessly visited today upon the freshman in the laboratory. It is not in this wise that science is born. It is more likely to be killed, and the actual doings of the virtuosi were often as absurd as ever Swift could have wished, and some were danger-

ous in a different way, not morally as he thought but personally. The *Philosophical Transactions* record a transfusion which replenished the veins of an injured man with blood from a dog.

Nor will the import of the Royal Society be found in the scientific genius of the founders. Notables there were—a very few—among the early membership: Robert Boyle, atomist, mechanist, and theologian; Robert Hooke, a professional experimenter and grubber after facts; Bishop John Wallis, an important mathematician; Dr. Francis Glisson, clinician and pathologist. But it is not in the individual men any more than in the doings that the Royal Society bulks largest in historic interest, but rather in its existence and in the relations it created between men; in the provision, the absolutely novel provision, of community in science, and by extension in all learning.

Let me exemplify the point by pursuing in a little detail the story, the sometimes painful story, of the relations of the Royal Society with its greatest Fellow. It is often said that Newton was the making of the Royal Society. So he was, but—as if in accordance with his own Third Law of action equalling reaction—the reverse was equally true, and the Royal Society was the making of Newton, making him into a scientist who claimed and in thus doing *shared* discovery, instead of a Pythagorean polymath poring over secret symmetries in number. It brought him into the open. And this is a more edifying tale than that of the prestige which Newton shed upon his colleagues. For it has to do with drawing advantage from the frailties of men instead of from their triumphs.

Isaac Newton was eighteen years old in 1660 and a freshman in Trinity College, Cambridge. Five years later as a very junior fellow, he retreated from the contagion of the plague to his mother's manor in Lincolnshire. For once a legend is true. It was indeed an apple falling as he sat in the garden that set his mind into a speculation on the power of gravity. But this was no desultory meditation of the kind which often afflicts recent college graduates. He left a fragmentary memoir of what proved to be his months of discovery:

THE CARLETON MISCELLANY

I found the Method [of fluxions—i.e. the calculus] by degrees in the years 1665 and 1666. In the beginning of the year 1665 I found the method of approximating Series and the Rule for reducing any dignity of any Binomial into such a series [i.e., he had formulated the Binomial Theorem]. The same year in May I found the method of tangents of Gregory and Slusius, and in November had the direct method of fluxions [the differential calculus], and the next year in January had the Theory of colours, and in May following I had entrance into ye inverse method of fluxions [integral calculus]. And the same year I began to think of gravity extending to ye orb of the Moon, and having found out how to estimate the force with w^{ch} [a] globe revolving within a sphere presses the surface of the sphere, from Kepler's Rule of the periodical times of the Planets being in a sesquialterate proportion of their distances from the centers of their Orbs, I deduced that the forces w^{ch} keep the Planets in their Orbs must [be] reciprocally as the squares of their distances from the centers about w^{ch} they revolve: and thereby compared the force requisite to keep the Moon in her Orb with the force of gravity at the surface of the earth, and found them answer pretty nearly. All this was in the two plague years of 1665 and 1666, for in those days I was in the prime of my age for invention, and minded Mathematicks and Philosophy more than at any time since.

The calculus, the composition of white light, the theory of gravity — Newton was twenty-three years old. He had identified the elements of the world picture of classical physics — and *he kept them to himself*. He told no one, and turned instead to other interests, to further experiments in optics, but also to theology and prophecy and the chronology of the Bible and the antique kingdoms of the world. And thus far his relations with the nascent Royal Society were nil.

Those relations developed through three stages. The first opened with Newton's first communication in 1672 of what he thought "the oddest if not the most considerable detection yet made in the operations of nature." This, his first paper, contains the description of the experiments in which he passed a circular beam of sunlight through a prism. What he detected was not, as

is sometimes said, the spectrum of the colors in refraction (that had been known since the first rainbow was observed), but rather the differential refrangibility of colors. The prism spread the beam into a band. It followed that white light is composite, and the vein of this paper is as enthusiastic as would be suited to so novel a fact. Indeed, it was too novel. It went against the instinct, centuries old, that light is simple, and that colors are changes in light. Here was an unknown young man saying that colors are the parts of light. He was saying both more and less than was expected of him, more in that no one had imagined such a thing, and less in that he was concerned with how light behaves and not with what it is or why. Robert Hooke, chief experimentalist in the Society, likened Newton's finding to that of one who should say that the sounds of a fiddle are already in the bowstring. And instead of meeting with the recognition that rewards discovery, Newton found himself embarked on a controversy that lasted four years and more. It was an embittering experience. It intensified a tendency, no doubt ingrained in lonely childhood, to suffer from a sense of persecution. Thereafter Newton withdrew into a posture of haughty renunciation. There is a famous letter to Leibniz: "I was so persecuted," he wrote, "with discussions arising from my theory of light that I blamed my own imprudence for parting with so substantial a blessing as my quiet to run after a shadow." So ended the first chapter of Newton's relations with the Royal Society.

A letter from Robert Hooke started the second phase. Hooke meant it as an olive branch, and bespoke Newton's collaboration. He included a problem, to find the trajectory of a body falling freely to the center of a rotating globe supposed permeable. Newton answered — not very kindly — and gave the wrong answer. Nor did he ever solve it, but left it the most influential unsolved problem in the history of science. For it drew Newton back to the study of gravity, back to the calculations which he had found only to "answer pretty nearly," and to the proof of the inverse square law which he had left as a private conjecture

thirteen years before. Gravity, indeed, was the great preoccupation of the moment. What does hold the world together in a universe where motion (as Descartes had shown) persists inertially to infinity? The answer was the law of gravity, which was conjectured to serve an inverse square law of intensity. But no one was mathematician enough to derive it from Kepler's Laws.

Then in 1684 a young astronomer, Edmund Halley, who had been working with Hooke and others of the London circle, decided to visit Cambridge and consult Newton in person. The interview is famous. What, Halley inquired, would be the curve described by a gravitating body, supposing it to follow the inverse square relation? And Newton answered, "An ellipse," and at Halley's exclamation explained, "I've calculated it." In good scholarly fashion he could not put his hand upon the computations. And instead of simply redoing them, as he promised Halley he would do, he set to work for a second intensive period of concentration and composed the *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. That book unites for the first time knowledge of heaven and earth in a mathematical physics. There is no work in science with which it may be compared. Halley saw it through the press, and the Royal Society sponsored publication. And such was the second and most important episode in Newton's relations with the Royal Society. It elicited his work. Only in response to this summons from the scientific community did he give it generality. Nor was he always willing. The Royal Society drew him out, and it is painful to be drawn out. One has to acknowledge one's ambitions. The Royal Society violated Newton's privacy — and it provided him with an object for ambition, without which his might have remained no more than the speculations of many a mathematical hermit.

The third phase is less interesting. It concerns the fame and ceremonial of the latter years. Newton made his return, not unwillingly now. He moved to London. He became an elder statesman of science. He served national pride as a culture hero. In that role he lent himself to the *Streit* over the invention of the calculus which his disciples conducted against Leibniz. Conse-

quences proved as mixed as motives. As President in his latter years Newton towered over the Royal Society, which basked for a little in reflected glory and then went to sleep in the shadow of his reputation.

It is, indeed, first through the Royal Society, that science enters into British history. Only in reference to institutions may we speak with meaning of British, Russian, or American science. When we do so speak, what we mean is not the content of science, which is about nature and the same for all, but the way of doing science. And the British style appears in science as in politics or culture. It is practical, empirical, individualistic not to say idiosyncratic. This is the counterpart in science, as elsewhere, to French rational rigor, to Teutonic metaphysical depth, or to American industrial mass.

Let us consider, for a moment certain high relations which we may perceive between science and society through the medium of the history of the Royal Society. Then science will appear, not as an inhuman nexus of technique, but as a contrivance of men, and its continuous creation a drama like any other, replete with chance and choice, with opportunity improved or lost, with the interplay of character and fortune.

Culturally, the very components were ill assorted. On the one hand, the Royal Society formed itself in service to Bacon's philosophy which would make science of an anthill of experimental facts; on the other hand the founders had to accommodate the abstract mathematicism of Galileo. Such complements of experiment and theory first met in equal strength in Newton, thesis and antithesis, and so it was that the synthesis of classical physics was presented to the Royal Society, and not elsewhere. And the Royal Society which received it went on to fall on evil times.

It suffered hurt from the aristocratic corruption which afflicted all corporate life in 18th century Britain—in Church, in Municipality, in the Universities, in the Army and Navy, in the rotting boroughs represented in the House of Commons. But the cleavage between science and the springs of power went deep into the social structure, deeper than the division between scien-

tific and aristocratic Fellows of the Royal Society. The Restoration brought reaction against the Nonconformist legacy of the Puritan Revolution, and science was a ward of Nonconformity rather than of the Anglican Establishment. The public schools taught no science. No more did Oxford, and scarcely more did Cambridge. They only taught the governing class. Science was excluded from the universities, along with the dissenters who would study it and who had to teach themselves. Thus was vigor of mind divorced from urbanity of taste, and the poverty of British mathematical achievement after Newton was a direct consequence.

Ironically enough, the leadership of Newtonian mechanics fell to France and to the analytical mathematicians who flourished in the tradition of Descartes — to d'Alembert, Laplace, and Lagrange. They took Newton's planetary system as the model of all mechanics. They wrote equations about systems of masses acting as points under the influence of forces that diminished as the square of the distance between any two. They considered, first electricity, and then magnetism, and then electric current, and even probabilities, and resolved the quantities to point values. And so all physics became a reduction and adaptation of laws like that of gravity, an affair of centers of force acting and reacting across spaces. This was the triumph of the revolutionary and Napoleonic generation of French science, seizing the leadership into the early nineteenth century. The vigor and practicality of French revolutionary scientific institutions made as sharp a contrast with the lethargy of the Royal Society as did the radicalism of French political reform with the fossilizing of the Tory old regime in England. In England the French revolution came late to science as it did to politics, and when it did come, in the 1830's and 1840's, it was in the British pattern: utilitarian and individualistic.

The Royal Society then became properly professional as a feature of the British liberal reform. Causes may scarcely be distinguished from effects, but it is at least a correlation that fundamental scientific innovation again graced the Royal Society. It

had been magnificent, all the French effort at abstraction in the 18th century. But it went too far, tending to turn physics into mathematics, or at best into stuff for equations, stretching nature on a rack of differential analysis. Then in 1831 Michael Faraday, perhaps the greatest of experimenters and quite innocent of mathematics, discovered the induction of an electrical current in a magnetic field. Till then theory had contemplated no physical connection, no mechanical linkages, through the spaces between charges and bodies. But it was precisely in the spaces that Faraday drew his famous lines of force. Electromagnetic theory, first in Faraday's hands and then in Maxwell's new and handy equations of the field, is the most beautiful reward of the British style in science. Nor is it only that. Critical analysis of the spatial relations concerned is at the bottom of relativity. And now it was the French who were out of touch. Poincaré could have had relativity before Einstein had he only learned to take Maxwell's feel for the physical as seriously as his own passion for the purest elegance.

Style and content, indeed, are hardly more separable in science than in literature—and the scientists from all the world who gathered last summer for the Royal Society's own celebration paid the tribute of universal science to the British style, and to the body which preserves its continuity and identity.

All throughout the story, the Royal Society, like its academic counterparts elsewhere, has served scientists as the mecca for ambition and science as the guardian of standards. Newton was certainly the greatest, but he was only the first whom it brought from obscurity into the open. Election to its Fellowship represents, indeed, the great event in the personal life of a British scientist. It means arrival. There is no more poignant episode in that history than the sad story of Humphry Davy and Michael Faraday—Davy, a country boy came by way of chemistry to fame and fortune and the great world, who then sought to prevent the election of Faraday, his own pupil who had come from even less. Faraday forgave him—it was Davy who could not give—or forgive—a younger man his day. And perhaps it is less

surprising than it might appear that a distinguished novelist of our own time should have also had a career as a physicist. In his little book on *The Two Cultures* C. P. Snow writes as if the two worlds he inhabits were utterly sundered in cultural schizophrenia. But surely it is no accident that the theme his novels handle best is mastery or technical proficiency within the social texture, and even more specifically the interplay of power, ambition, and principle within small groups of experts. The universe of his discourse is the committee world, and he is the keeper of its conscience.

Ambition and innovation — why should men do science? Not for material reasons. We are all taught to curl a lip at applied science and to value knowledge as the goal. "Disinterested curiosity" is the phrase preferred. But that only begs to question. Why should men be disinterested? And scientists do work for something else, though they will not always quite admit it (because they are also supposed to be humble). They work for fame, for reputation and for fame. They wish both to find truth, and to be the ones who found it. Hence — as Professor Merton has shown — the long and seemingly rather ignoble series of squabbles over priorities in discovery. Scientists have not been materialistic in the economic sense, not typically. They do not much care about ordinary property. But they care terribly about their intellectual property in their discoveries. They even attach their names to them: Newton's Laws, the Compton Effect, Planck's Constant — and some we might not wish to attach our own names to — Bright's Disease, the Wasserman Test.

And now, perhaps, we come to the most serious significance of the Royal Society, epitomizing as it does the whole structure of institutionalization in science. Its recognition has embodied those norms that make for innovation and discovery. Maxwell might probably have been a theologian in the Middle Ages. The medieval University was the guardian of Christian dogma: it directed the best minds to theology, to truth as given. Modern institutions of learning make research and discovery their shibboleth, and not in science only. But it was science which thus

reoriented learning rather toward the future than the past, the unknown rather than the once known. Scholarship in the stricter sense, whether scholastic in the Middle Ages or Humanistic in the Renaissance, was concerned with recalling culture, even as we are doing now. It contemplated culture under the aspect of the past. But science turns to new things rather than to old, and now most systematic learning seeks to shape the future.

And there is another respect in which science has served scholarship and thought. This is less evident, perhaps, but more precious. I mean by winning independence. It is not that scientists are more courageous or personally more resistant to the pressures of the world than humanists, nor that science is a higher enterprise. But there is a difference. Theology and philosophy, literature and politics—their findings are about man or God, personality or affairs. Science, too, is made by man. But he makes it about nature, not about himself. In this wise, too, Galileo was the founder. "If this of which we dispute," he makes Salviati say in the great *Dialogue* over the Copernican system, "If this of which we dispute were some point of law, or other part of the studies called the humanities, wherein there is neither truth nor falsehood, we might give sufficient credit to the acuteness of wit, readiness of answers, and the greater accomplishments of writers, and hope that he who is most proficient in these will make his reason more probable and plausible. But the conclusions of natural science are true and necessary, and the judgment of men has nothing to do with them." To suppose otherwise is to give the game away. It is to agree that the papal court was justified when it decided to condemn Galileo on the ground that the Copernican system, however convenient mathematically, tended to unsettle men's minds, and weaken authority and order in the face of the common enemy.

"NULLIUS IN VERBA"—the Royal Society took a line from Horace for its motto, to express its systematic resistance to authority thus conceived, its rejection of authority, its skepticism of the word. And if we owe a debt in freedom, we pay a penalty in feeling, for most liberations exact a price in alienation

from some warmer home. In nothing was Bacon's philosophy more acute than in its identification of the errors that lurk in myth and words, or in its summons to a simple, denotative classification in which names should express things.

The Royal Society answered clearly to that summons. Contributors of papers were instructed to use a "close, naked, natural way of Speaking; positive expressions, clear tenses; a native easiness." John Wilkins seems in retrospect the most farsighted of the founders, for he explicitly set himself the task of accommodating Galileo's mathematicization of science with Bacon's vision of its social role. He clearly perceived that science held out the prospect of definitive communication by symbols which should represent things and not opinions. Thus might the ground of discovery be *occupied* and *won*, and he devised a "philosophical language," a kind of shorthand which anticipated John Locke's psychology. Locke himself found the great interest of Newton's method to lie in the knowledge it makes possible of the operations of the human mind that can create such science. Locke agreed that the proper study of mankind is man. But even that now begins in experience of nature, of the world outside, and Locke laid down as a condition of sane discussion that all real ideas are the records of sensations. Man is what he makes of his experience, and the way to improve him is to give him a better one. Thus did science through philosophy issue in what we see as progress. And in the 18th century Enlightenment, problems of science became problems of language. Mechanics became an exercise in analysis, and calculus its language. The whole reform of learning might become a simple linguistic reform, redesignating words to make them speak facts, recombining them in a syntax of experience, conveying truth by nomenclature. Think of the science of chemistry. Its great reform was one of naming. Martial vitriol turned into copper sulfate. And now its names do *say* compounds. Its symbols balance in equations. And nothing preoccupies the modern philosophers of science more than communications theory and the analysis of symbolic languages. It links them with the literary critics, and both are heirs of Locke.

For the Royal Society has lived with paradox and has exacted its price for the scientific picture. *Nullius in verba*—suspicion of the word became dependence on the symbol. "We think only by means of words," says Condillac, and we might remember Lewis Carroll's remark that the great question is, not what words mean, but who is master, we or they? Professor Bush leaves us in no doubt that the scientific reform of language impoverished prose and poetry in the seventeenth century, stripping the common consciousness of the emotive imagery to which a Donne or a Sir Thomas Browne might speak. The poet might use the science of the old world of magic and of myth, when man and nature corresponded, the great world and the little. It is the rare poet after Newton who did not grudge his alienation, and indeed modern romanticism may be the poetic counter-stroke of personality against a world in which language is reduced to the classification of measurements.

Communication—why is this the great preoccupation nowadays? No doubt because Royal Societies open no royal road out of isolation. It is striking how often men of science recur wistfully to this when they reflect upon their lives in its community. "Out yonder", writes Einstein, musing in lonely old age of youth, "Out yonder there was this huge world, which exists independently of us human beings, and which stands before us like a great, eternal riddle, at least partially accessible to our inspection and thinking. The contemplation of this extra-personal world beckoned like a liberation, and I soon noticed that many a man whom I had learned to esteem and to admire had found inner freedom and security in devoted preoccupation with it . . . Similarly motivated men of the present and of the past, as well as the insights which they had achieved were the friends which could not be lost." And James Clerk Maxwell, thinking of all his forebears in the Royal Society and elsewhere in science, writes "of the company of those illustrious men who by aspiring to noble ends, whether intellectual or practical, have risen above the region of storms into a clearer atmosphere, where there is no misrepresentation of opinion, nor ambiguity of expression, but

where one mind comes into closest contact with another at the point where both approach nearest to the truth." And Robert Oppenheimer despairs poignantly of sharing the beauties which they of physics know, and writes movingly of the true community which resides in science, where he is understood.

It may be so, but threnody is no vein for science, not even if the price of fellowship is that it should concern precisely those things that are indifferent to us. And if that is the fact, then perhaps we had better bottom our admiration rather in Thomas Sprat's common sense on Science, when he says:

It is enough that we gather from hence that by bringing Philosophy down again to men's sight and practice, from whence it was flown away so high: The Royal Society has put it into a condition of standing out, against the invasions of *Time*, or even *Barbarism* itself: that by establishing it on a firmer foundation, than the *original notions* of men alone, upon all the *works of nature*; by turning it into one of the *Arts of Life*, of which men may see there is daily need; they have provided that it cannot hereafter be extinguish'd . . . but that men must lose their *eyes* and *hands*, and must leave off desiring to make their *lives* convenient, or pleasant; before they can be willing to *destroy* it.



• THOM GUNN

ADOLESCENCE

After the history has been made,
and when Wallace's shaggy head
glares on London from a spike, when
the exiled general is again
gliding into Athens harbor
now as embittered foreigner,
when the lean creatures crawl out of
camps and in silence try to live;
I pass foundations of houses,
walking through the wet spring, my knees
drenched from high grass charged with water,
and am part, still, of the done war.

SIGNS OF AN UNDERTAKING

Signs of an undertaking
— reminders, only, without
the drama of fall or spring:
they are small but explicit
signs, for instance the face of
an old woman on the bus —
she ribs the driver, with cough
and cackle, then turns to us
twisting a wink from her soiled
worn face.

There. There. In her own
terms mine are at once revealed
— signs, something undertaken.

● PHILIP BOOTH

SMALL DANCE

I thought I knew, for once,
how it is with the world.

And I cannot say it. Except
that the gray cat, who slept
on my desk all morning, curled
against waking, woke to claw
at my pipe smoke. I stretched
to catch at some meaning; my mind
began to join the small dance,
and I saw my mind, like the cat's paw,
play with pure fire: I watched
him watch the smoke dissolve,
and saw my own prehensile hands
reach out to pat the cat.

Unsatisfied, he turned, resigned
to tom-cat sleep. And that,
for both of us, was that. If
curiosity killed, we'd both be stiff
long since. We breathe it.
Neither of us understands.

But something we could not resolve
had, for a moment, smoke to wreathe it.

● KENNETH PITCHFORD

FOR THE PRESENTATION OF A JAPANESE PRINT

The heron in the waves is tantamount
to daring that high spiralling of foam
against all doubt. Does he recall the times
wings wearied landlessly, lured out too far,
or — in the marshes — the sharp report?

This is as near to that pure being
as wind and waves create, soft falls like hair,
troughs opened skywards, almost closing out
timidities we seek for in the sun,
ungainly balancer, emblem of sheer joy.

Taking its representative on paper
to that closed skylit corner of your mind,
climbing gray spirals up steep declivities,
you shrink into yourself, not to return,
safe from the frozen spray upon the page.

No further embassies. Yet take these words
I fashioned but to praise the miracle
that hurls the heron headlong from known shores
into delight, poises him there, then draws
him safely back, incautious wanderer,
to perch the chimneys of your landlocked sleep.

• HOWARD NEMEROV

A PREDECESSOR OF PERSEUS

Since he is older than Hamlet or Stavrogin,
Older than Leopold Bloom; since he has been
Stravaging through the Dark Wood several years
Beyond the appointed time, meeting no wolf,
Leopard, or lion (not to mention Virgil);
And long since seen the span of Keats conclude,
And the span of Alexander, — he begins
At last to wonder.

Had his holy books
Misled him? or had he deceived himself?
Like some he knew, who'd foolishly confused
The being called and being chosen; they
Ran down the crazy pavement of their path
On primrose all the way.

An old friend said
"The first thing to learn about wisdom is
This, that you can't do anything with it."
Wisdom. If that was what he had, he might,
Like a retired witch, keep it locked up
In the broom closet. But he rides his road,
Passing the skinless elder skeletons
Who smile, and maybe he will keep on going
Until the grey unbearable she of the world
Shall raise her eyes, and recognize, and grin
At her eternal amateur's approach,
All guts, no glass, to meet her gaze head on
And be stricken in the likeness of himself
At least, if not of Keats or Alexander.

MAKE BIG MONEY AT HOME!
WRITE POEMS IN SPARE TIME!

Oliver wanted to write about reality.
He sat before a wooden table,
He poised his wooden pencil
Above his pad of wooden paper,
And attempted to think about agony
And history, and the meaning of history,
And all stuff like that there.
Suddenly this wooden thought got in his head:
A Tree. That's all, no more than that,
Just one tree, not even a note
As to whether it was deciduous
Or evergreen, or even where it stood.
Still, because it came unbidden,
It was inspiration, and had to be dealt with.
Oliver hoped that this particular tree
Would turn out to be fashionable,
The axle of the universe, maybe,
Or some other mythologically
Respectable tree-contraption
With dryads, or having to do
With the knowledge of good and evil, & the Fall.
"A Tree," he wrote down with his wooden pencil
Upon his pad of wooden paper
Supported by the wooden table.
And while he sat there waiting
For what would come next to come next,
The whole wooden house began to become
Silent, particularly silent, sinisterly so.

GNOMES

THE POET AT FORTY

"A light, a winged, and a holy thing,
Who if his God's not in him cannot sing."
Ah, Socrates, behold him here at last,
Wingless & heavy, still enthusiast.

LOVE

A Sandwich and a Beer might cure these Ills,
If only Boys and Girls were Bars and Grills.

MINIM

The red butterflies are so beautiful!
But they will not stand still to be looked at.

A GLANCE AT THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Between the window and the screen
Some dead flies shake their cobweb shrouds
Against the North wind that brings rain
And hurries the birds beneath the clouds.

A SACRIFICED AUTHOR

Father, he said, after the critics' chewing,
Forgive them, for they know not what I'm doing.

CONTEMPORARY CHRONICLES

By JOHN DOS PASSOS

For something like forty years I've been getting various sorts of narratives off my chest without being able to hit upon a classification for them. There's something dreary to me about the publisher's arbitrary division of every word written for publication into fiction and nonfiction. My writing has a most irritating way of being difficult to classify in either category. At times I would find it hard to tell you whether the stuff is prose or verse. Gradually I've come up with the tag; contemporary chronicle.

The sort of novel I started to try to write in the antediluvian days of the first World War was intended to be very much a chronicle of the present. It was a chronicle of protest. Dreiser and Norris had accustomed us to a dark picture of American society. Greedy capitalists were getting in the way of the attainment of the Jeffersonian dream every American had hidden away somewhere in his head.

Three Soldiers my first long novel was an attempt to chronicle the feelings and frustrations of the natural-born civilian who found himself in the army. We were all natural-born civilians in the early years of this century. Now we are very much more regimented. It is hard to explain to young people born into today's regimented world how automatically their fathers and grandfathers resented the sort of forcible organization that has become the basis of today's social structure.

Manhattan Transfer which followed *Three Soldiers* was an attempt to chronicle the life of a city. It was about a lot of different kinds of people. In a great city there is more going on than you can cram into one man's career.

I wanted to find some way of making the narrative carry a very large load.

The period immediately before and after World War I had been a period of experimentation both in Europe and America.

THE CARLETON MISCELLANY

The Europeans have a sense of order and hierarchy that makes them love labels as much as the typical American tends to distrust them. Maybe trying to escape classification is one of our national vices. It certainly is mine. They called the sort of thing I wanted to do futurism or expressionism. I wasn't much interested in the labels on these various literary packages but I was excited by what I found inside.

In a war you spend a lot of time waiting around. While I was in the ambulance service in France and Italy I had managed to find time to read a certain amount of French and Spanish and Italian, poetry mostly.

The Italian futurists, the Frenchmen of the school of Rimbaud, the poets who went along with cubism in painting were trying to produce something that stood up off the page. Simultaneity, some of them called it. That excited me.

Why not write a simultaneous chronicle? A novel full of snapshots of life like a documentary film. I had been very much affected by the sort of novel that Stendhal originated in French with his *Chartreuse De Parme* and Thackeray in English with *Vanity Fair*. I remember reading *Vanity Fair* for the tenth time rather early in my life; after that I lost count. You might call these chronicle novels. *War and Peace* is another example.

In this sort of novel the story is really the skeleton on which some slice of history the novelist has seen enacted before his own eyes is brought back to life. Personal adventures illustrate the development of a society. Historical forces take the place of the Olympians of ancient Greek drama.

I had read James Joyce's *Ulysses* on my way home from Europe laid up with a bad case of flu in a tiny inside cabin down in the third class of a Cunarder. It's a marvelous way to read a book. *Ulysses* got linked in my mind with Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. They are both subjective novels. My interests were the opposite: I wanted to write objectively. I had been pretty well steeped in the eighteenth century from early youth. Sterne too had tried to make his narrative carry a very large load. In college I had been taken with the crystal literalness of Defoe's nar-

ratives and by Fielding's and Smollett's rollicking satire. Fielding and Smollett came easy to me because I'd been prepared for them by Captain Marryatt's sea stories of life in the Royal Navy which gave me infinite pleasure when I was a small boy. I read enough Spanish to be interested in Pio Baroja's modern revival of the Spanish picaresque style.

I dreamed of using whatever I'd learned from all these methods to produce a satirical chronicle of the world I knew. I felt that everything should go in: popular songs, political aspirations and prejudices, ideals, hopes, delusions, crackpot notions, clippings out of the daily newspapers.

The basic raw material is everything you've seen and heard and felt, it's your childhood and your education and serving in the army, and travelling in odd places, and finding yourself in odd situations. It is those rare moments of suffering and delight when a man's private sensations are amplified and illuminated by a flash of insight that gives him the certainty that what he is seeing and feeling is what millions of his fellowmen see and feel in the same situation only heightened. Seen a little sharper perhaps.

This sort of universal experience made concrete by the individual's shaping of it, is the raw material of all the imaginative arts. These flashes of insight when strong emotions key all the perceptions up to their highest point are the nuggets of pure gold.

They are rare even in the lives of the greatest poets.

The journeymen of the arts have to eke them out with lower quality ore. A novelist has to use all the stories people tell him about themselves, all the little dramas in other people's lives he gets glimpses of without knowing just what went before or just what will come after, the fragments of talk he overhears in the subway or on a streetcar, the letter he picks up on the street addressed by one unknown character to another, the words on a scrap of paper found in a trashbasket, the occasional vistas of reality he can pick out of the mechanical diction of a newspaper report.

It was this sort of impulse that came to a head in the three

U.S.A. novels. Somewhere along the line I had been impressed by Eisenstein's documentary films like the *Cruiser Potemkin*. Eisenstein used to say that his master in montage was Griffith of the *Birth of a Nation* fame. Montage was the word used in those days to describe the juxtaposition of contrasting scenes in motion pictures. I took to montage to try to make the narrative stand up off the page.

The chief difficulty you have to meet when you try to write about the world today is that the shape of society is changing so fast that the descriptive and analytical part of the human mind has not been able to keep up with it. The old standards of good and evil have broken down and no new standards have come into being to take their place. A couple of generations have been brought up on the theory that standards of behavior don't mean anything. The basic old rocky preconceptions—call them prejudices if you want—on which a writer, whether he was for them or against them, used to find a firm footing, have been so silted over with the double talk of various propagandas that he can't get a foothold on them any more. You are left wallowing in the quicksand of the theory that nothing really matters. Morals? ethics? How shall we behave? Let's just pull it out of the air. An old time Christian named John Bunyan called that quicksand the Slough of Dispond.

The generation I got my education from, the generation that cut its eyeteeth on the deceptions and massacres of the first World War had a fervent sense of right and wrong. We thought civilization was going to hell in a hack, and in some ways we were right. But we did believe too that if people used their brains the modern world could produce a marvelous society. There was a germ of truth in both conceptions. We suggested some radical remedies. The trouble was that when the remedies were tried in most cases the cure proved worse than the disease.

It was in the cards that the writing of a would-be chronicler like myself should become more and more satirical as the years went by.

I'm going to read you a few samples from pieces I've used in

various novels for purposes of contrast or to explain some facet of the underlying tale, samples of what maybe you might call the "documentary" style.

EDITORS' NOTE: The above remarks served as an introduction to a reading by Mr. Dos Passos, at Carleton College on November 30, 1960, of the following selections from his own works: (1) Camera Eye from *42nd Parallel*, beginning "the garden was crowded and outside Madison Square;" (2) Portrait of Steinmetz from *42nd Parallel*; (3) Prologue of *The Grand Design*, describing FDR's first inauguration; (4) Prologue from the trilogy, "District of Columbia"; (5) three pieces from his latest work, *Midcentury*, including a profile of Senator McClellan, a profile of James Dean, and the book's epilogue.

Mr. Dos Passos appeared at Carleton under the auspices of the Andersen Foundation in American Studies. The American Studies program for 1960-61 was devoted to a study of the Thirties. Mr. Dos Passos was one of a series of speakers in the program, including Frances Perkins, Raymond Moley and Gardner Means.

THE QUARTER'S EPIC

• JOHN PAUKER

THE I

The I of this poem is a mask, a skam, a kasm,
The I of this poem is an amsk, a smak, a kams,
The I of this poem is a samk, a maks,
I'm an ask, a sak,
A kas, a ska,
I'm an aks.

• FRANCIS BERRY

CITY OR PLAIN

For Björn Thorsteinsson

At sixteen read Dasent's *Burnt Njal*, dear the work;
Then the Temple Classics *Laxdaela*, moved thereby;
Next study of E. V. Gordon's *Introduction to Old Norse*,
discovering
Settlers in Greenland, voyagers to Vinland . . . Much later
Poul Nörlund and the grave garments of Herjolfssnes
Pathetic (but intersperse Auden and Macneice, Lord Dufferin,
or more important
Laxness and his enchanting Salka Valka), and now
To find oneself in Reykjavik and the bedroom window
Looks down over a courtyard and the corrugated iron roofs
Painted here green there red, and hear the leisured ample sounds
Of any town in summer, the romp
And squall of children with a ball (though the idea
Of cricket has never been borne in upon them), the clever stir
Of a sewing-machine and the contented humming
Of a woman long brushing her hair. Open windows. Gulls sweep.
No darkness for four months, and three fishing vessels
Drawn up on stocks for repair show funnels
Higher than the corrugated roofs. This then the holy land.
And Reykjavik holier and more heathen than other cities.

Grown up

From the stead of Ingolf Arnason to 70,000 dwellers, iron-roofed
So that from incoming aircraft or from the hill this city strikes
Out and upwards with its brilliant colours, holier more beautiful
Than Rome or Athens or the others. Fairy-tale. Fish reek. But holy,
More heathen than the Thingvellir? (Forum or Acropolis?) Go,
Get the bus and find out. Tread the booth-stones of Snorri Gothi,
Make to leap the chasm Skarphedin leapt, appreciate the plain

So ringed with mountains near or far, blue-tanged and snow-
topped

Or swart volcanic at hand. Here water, earth, fire, air and violence
Collided. Great law, tremendous talk. But now here is an inn
And the innkeeper looks like a German and his dining-room
Is ready laid for a party of north-west Germans, and the hideous
flag

(Red, yellow and black stripes) is set out on the high table beside
The aesthetically pleasing Icelandic flag (both in miniature). Who
Can hear the Althing wrangling into temper compelling more
murders

Now? Even though the hotelier with his great paunch
Politely fetches me a chair to sit on in the open until
The bus, crunching up on the lava drive, is ready to return
To Reykjavik?

Holier or more heathen, this plain or that city? Consider
Those who get about these days and those to visit the moon.
They will find the moon just as expected, just as I had expected
Iceland over years only to know what I had previously known —
Except the sewing-machine.

And as to the moon —

Well, even our prolonged looking at the thing will hardly
Have altered its rocks as the rocks here have been altered
— Here on this plain — by some actions of some men,
Their vibrative words, and by the stuff of their dead bones.

• BARRY SPACKS

IN THE CALM AND MEASURED COUNTRY

In the measured country:
In the calm and measured country where we sleep, last night
I woke, woke without motion,
And without motion in the dark so dark that I knew nothing,
There was no end of me;
I was as shapeless as the moment of my waking.

As if through water, as through black water then as if
Through water then I heard the fumble:
Jostle: heard the rushing someone something at the latch.

It was our daughter turning.
It was our daughter, turning in her sleep.

Again:
I knew that sound, it was
A tongue a tongue a blacker tongue than all the blackness,
Thrusting; working . . .

Our daughter turning.

Awake beside you,
So frightened measureless awake beside you,
I saw my father at this time of birth and dying,
I saw my father thrusting, working
Upon his death-bed's wrinkled country
Until he turned to roam a country
More calm and smooth, a measured country

Where all the quiet of his darkness
And all the motion of his stillness

Rolled through to be the dark I roamed in.

"What?"

"Listen. Do you hear . . .?"

"The child is turning."

"No, listen. Now! I hear —"

"The child. The child."

And pity those who wake in silence
And comfort those who sleep in darkness
And wake alone, and wake alone.

ONCE THE WORLD'S ON AGAIN

Once the world's on again goodwife will rise
And lovingly fill the coffee pot,
And goodman, a dream running back of his eyes
That he's urging along to its fade-out shot,

Will wake to the scent of the coffee done,
Will yawn wide alive to the sweep of the light
As the blinds are unbiased to let in the sun.
What amends for impossible hopes in the night?

If she plies him with coffee she'll help him to start
A civilization once more in the brain.
Has her love sent a flow of strength to his heart?
Is he ready to cope with the shuffle and strain

Of the day? Well, she's hailed him with kisses,
regaled him
With chattering comfort — what more can descend
But the sunshine? — she's beaming, brings coffee
and mail in:
After the dreaming, world without end.

BARRY SPACKS

SELF-PORTRAIT

Just as one may stare at a word —
Say, *word* — until it seems absurd,
So I watch my face in the glass,
And strangers pass.

SIX O'CLOCK

Again comes the hour of daily illusion
The mind strokes its fur with the touch of a woman
The children imagine the night will not happen
The rooster is herding his idiot flock;
The lover who knows he is surely forsaken
Waits on, the husband is searching for home
The foxes are watching in grandmother dark.



HUNGER

by LUIS C. HARSS

At eleven o'clock that morning, though he had eaten a large breakfast, Silverman was suddenly quite hungry and leaning forward on his desk he placed his hands on his stomach and moved them up and down repeatedly. Later, in the company dining room, however, he merely prodded his food with the tip of his fork and ate nothing.

Back in his office he read a number of reports but was unable to concentrate because of a headache which pressed gently with two strong pointed fingers into his temples. He sat perfectly erect leafing through papers and fanning himself while that other thing pulsed in him darkly.

When the clock struck 5:30 he did not start home immediately but decided to remain at his desk for a while because he had scarcely been able to resist running from the building in the middle of the afternoon grasping his chest, and he needed to restrain himself. Then he walked home instead of taking a bus. And he ran up the steps of his house, but paused before going in, because he was short of breath.

He came upon his wife sitting at the kitchen table, her chin on her arms, a bandanna wound around her head. What was she doing there? he wondered—for he never expected her to be there, to wait for him as he had waited for her, all day long, every minute of the day. Surely, if he had not returned, she would have been just as she was then, in the same chair, the same position—nothing could have changed her. But she was not idle, he could see that. In fact, she gave the impression of being quite busy, though she scarcely moved, except to offer him her lips, and she did not seem to be cooking. But there was a strong, nauseating strong smell of food in the room. Yet he saw no pans on the stove, not a single plate on the table.

He might, for all practical purposes, not have been in the room with her. The faucet in the sink was dripping a bit. She

was staring across the room, her eyes turned up, as if she were listening to the sound of the water. And when he cut off the water and kissed her on the forehead, she said:

"So you're home, Paul. What kept you so long?"

"Business," he said, and in a few words he told her a number of unimportant things, which she did not seem to listen to.

"The usual thing?" she said.

"Yes, more or less. And what about you? Are you feeling all right?"

He was disarmingly polite—it was his manner with her.

And she said:

"All right? Yes, I suppose I'm all right."

"And you've kept yourself busy?"

"Yes. You know, one thing and another . . ."

Then he sat next to her and played with her hair, which he loved. It was whitening and stiffening with age, but to him it felt as rich, as dark brown, as young as it had ever been, perhaps more than ever, because for several months now, since her illness, she had been growing it long. He removed her bandanna. The hair fell almost to the middle of her back, covering his fingers.

She remained with her chin on her arms, even then. But he, as he raised her hair to his lips, said:

"I've been looking forward so to coming home, sweet. I was so worried about you."

And she said, "Yes?"

He was frightened that he had spoken in his thick, excited voice, frightened by the sound of that voice, but she smiled what he understood to be an encouraging smile, though she said only, "Yes."

At the same time, he felt anger and contempt for himself. Yet he wrapped a tuft of her hair around his fingers, pulling her head to him.

"You know I get terribly bored at the office," he said. "It's coming home to you that I love."

And she laughed approvingly, or understandingly.

"Of course you do."

She patted his free hand, which lay next to her on the table.

It was because of this gesture, more than the curious sweetness in her voice, that he suddenly noticed how fat his wife had become—how fat and beautiful, for the two qualities could not be separated in her. So fat that she seemed pregnant, though of course she was not, she never had been—but with age had come to resemble it at every moment, with a stomach and breasts as full as those of a pregnant woman, as if she were young again, with a fresh bloom, at the very beginning of her womanhood.

Her hand lay upon his, very soft, very heavy, almost as large as his and a quarter of an inch wider, at the very least. Her face was round and pink, and she had only the faintest suggestion of a chin. Pressed under her brows, which had grown large as bulbs, were her eyes, pale, even, shallow blue eyes that drifted a lot these days from object to object, without focussing clearly. There was never a dark look, or a preoccupied look, in those eyes.

"She must be very happy," he thought, as they paused on him—though he could not guess why, or whether he was involved in her happiness. "What has become of her? She used to be such a little wisp of a girl when I married her . . ."

This he found extremely disquieting, but he paid no conscious heed to it, though he envied her, her healthy fatness, her happiness, especially because, for some time now, he had been feeling older and less content with himself.

She sat forward, half over the table, her huge round breasts spread before his eyes—those pregnant breasts that had appeared so gradually, while she slept or breathed quietly, that he had been able to lie next to them, night after night, without feeling them, or else, without realizing they had grown, for her rich, long hair had spilled down her body to cover them. And she was on the point of laughing again, laughing at him, because he had allowed her to sense his confusion.

"How about some dinner?" he said, smelling food again, in his nostrils, or in the room, he was not sure which.

But where was it, after all? The washbasin and counters had been scrubbed bare, he had seen this when he turned off the dripping faucet—scrubbed until everything shone, so that whenever he looked down he saw nothing but his face reflected on the surfaces of things.

He took out his pocket-watch and pointed to it. Then he left it on the table. Its needle, under the round glass, jumped from one second to another. And in his mouth there was a dry, bitter taste. He swallowed to relieve himself, but it persisted, so he went to the window to breathe purifying air.

"What do you want?" she asked, that slow, suspicious look of hers, with its untroubled sweetness, resting on him.

"My dinner," he said. "Is it ready?"

She said: "It's been done for more than an hour, Carl. You were so late that I thought you weren't coming, so as I didn't know I didn't wait for you. I've already had my dinner."

And he noticed that her pink, bursting cheeks were a bit flushed.

But he said:

"I wasn't asking for your dinner. It's mine I wanted . . ."

And just then he noticed that her sweet smile, which had become almost pitying, was touching him again, and changing, to a greedy smile, and she was wetting one corner of her lips with her tongue. The strong odor of food, it seemed to him, as he stood behind her, was not so much in the room as around her, in her clothes, in her breasts, and wrapped in her hair.

He felt that greediness in himself, too, watching her. He was afraid he would imitate her.

"I'm going to spend the evening with you," he said. "But first I want to eat well. I feel weak and tired out."

When she did not answer, he added:

"Well, where is it?"

She lowered her head, sank into her chair, and he made useless gestures, going across the room, as if to search for his dinner.

"You came home so late and I was so hungry," she said, "that I ate it."

He said at once, it was so difficult for him to feel disappointed, or surprised:

"That's all right. I'll find something else."

And he searched. He pressed his stomach with his hands as he walked from one side of the room to the other, because that seemed to dim the pain, or at least to hide it with another pain, which he could clasp with his fingers. He opened the stove and the refrigerator—but he could scarcely see into them. He could not stand very straight or bend very low. And they were both empty, quite empty, and spotlessly clean, as if she had washed them that afternoon.

"I was terribly hungry, Carl," she was saying, again and again, as if she had not already explained the situation.

She spoke to herself—he had no doubt of that—because she enjoyed remembering her sensations, now that she had satiated them, now that he, the latecomer in his house, had received them from her. She rocked to and fro in her chair, her arms folded, as if she were holding a child to her breast.

"Terribly hungry, and I felt sick. Forgive me, Carl . . ."

And when he turned to her, the smile on her lips was so pleasant that he said, with great tenderness, a tenderness he had not found in himself for years, till that very moment:

"Yes, of course, I understand. Don't worry, my darling."

Then he kissed her cheeks, kissed her eyes where there were tears almost as large as the eyes themselves, tears as fat as big raindrops.

"What else," she whispered as he stooped, "could I have done?"

"Very well, then, I'll go out to dinner," he said.

He marched out of the kitchen, through the dining-room—although there was a shorter route through the living-room—and having nothing better to do, snatched a hat from the rack in the corridor that led to the front door, and planted it on his head as he went out. She followed him down the corridor, a furious, happy shadow that extended, sometimes, before him, sometimes around him, enveloping him, an enormous shadow, deep as wa-

ter, that made him feel he was swimming in the bottom of the ocean.

"Why can't you be on time?" she said at the top of her voice. "Why don't you come home when you're supposed to if you want your dinner? You know I'm not well and I can't cook at all times. Why don't you hurry after work? What do you expect of me?"

He felt himself diminishing as she raised her voice, as her double chin and her red face, red as blood, red as her hungry lips, shook with anger. He had intended, some time before, to say, "Enough! Don't raise your voice at me!" But he had no sound in his throat.

Just before he reached the door she caught him. He thought she was going to strike him, but instead she embraced him, she tightened her arms around him till he could not breathe.

"Are you leaving me again tonight . . .?"

And he, to calm her, fondled her a bit, caressed her cheek, and looked into those beseeching, unchangeable eyes of hers which even then, in her grief, were like nothing so much as the beautiful, clear eyes of a young pregnant girl.

"It's your fault," he said. "It's getting late."

And he felt a great urgency to be gone, and closed the door on the screaming woman.

He felt quite excited, more, perhaps, than he need have — so that he did not pay too much attention to where he was going. He went down the street to the corner, past a row of familiar houses, to an unknown, darkening street, and on, block after block. He might have walked fifteen blocks or so, or perhaps only one or two blocks. He looked neither right nor left, till he reached the central district, where all the houses were illuminated with huge neon signs.

The light pressed on his temples, and there, in the crowd that ambled to and fro, his head swelled with traffic sounds, and it was only with a great effort that he could advance further against the innumerable obstacles that blocked his path. But it was well worth the effort. If he had not held all of himself in his

hands, and closed his hands, if he had not been entirely self-sufficient, part of him might have escaped down the street, running hysterically. In fact, he was tempted to run, to cast people and things aside, as weeds, with flailing arms, but was capable only of very slow, swimming motions. He thought of sitting on the curb to rest for a while, but was afraid he might fall asleep or forget his errand.

Above all, he fought to keep his lips together and to extinguish the burning sensation in his stomach. "If only there were a restaurant," he said to himself, "where I could eat in peace, why, in no time I'd be a different man."

The hope, faint as it was, comforted him. But he went by four or five places before he could decide to carry out his plan. Insignificant, annoying little details kept him away: in one, a liveried doorman was soliciting people by waving a red cane in the air, which he pushed impatiently to one side. He saw a rowdy group of people entering another, and he walked past it. And the next he avoided because, for no reason, he was convinced that it must be full at that time of the evening. "I can't spare the time to bother with it," he thought. It was essential for him to find the right place, so as to be in the right mood—demanding but not intransigent, polite and decorous even in his suffering—now, more than ever!

At length he came to a place where he had been many times before—a small, dark restaurant with a covered entrance half lit by a storm lamp and a thick oak door, whose metal handle he had to press with both hands in order to release the latch. He had avoided that place until then because he knew the proprietor and was in no mood to be questioned by the man.

In the dimness of the room, the proprietor, an old gentleman dressed in black and white, stepped forward:

"Mr. Silverman . . . So good to see you!"

He wore a fancy bow tie, a fierce red flower in his lapel. As they squeezed through the tables, he pressed Silverman's arm slightly, a gesture of long acquaintance, just slightly intimate.

"And Mrs. Silverman . . .?"

"I'm alone tonight," Silverman said, and met his inquisitive eyes.

"Then you want the corner table . . ."

"Well, perhaps," Silverman thought, "I'll derive some pleasure from being questioned, after all, so long as it's done tactfully and the food is good."

"What can I eat tonight?" he asked.

The proprietor assured him, batting soft, almost opalescent eyes to see him better, that an excellent meal was available.

He read a long menu folded in three parts, the sides in gold and the middle in black, an arrangement that always interested him because it seemed to say, "This is a very luxurious restaurant, with a large assortment of foods." It was heartening to be received in this manner. The warm, colored lights and the brownish pictures on the walls added to his general feeling of comfort.

The proprietor hovered over his shoulder, staring at him—but he held the menu up to his face, so close that only he could see it. Still the man would not give in. He was pointing at something, turning the flaps of the menu:

"If you will permit a suggestion, Mr. Silverman . . ."

"I don't care for that," Silverman said.

But to little effect, because the proprietor said:

"It's a specialty of the house."

And he snatched the menu away.

"No," Silverman said, raising a finger to his lips.

"Oh, in that case . . ." the proprietor said.

He leaned with both hands on the back of a chair, facing Silverman, raising and lowering the chair as if he were about to sit down.

Then he said, in an almost menacing voice:

"You look tired, Mr. Silverman. Will you have a drink with me—on the house?"

"No, thank you, I'm afraid I'm not at all thirsty," Silverman said.

Done with the menu, he sat far back in his chair and permitted

his eyes to wander, idly, about the room, as if some deep thought engaged him.

"Perhaps Mrs. Silverman is indisposed," the proprietor said, more out of curiosity than politeness, it seemed, but in a tone that demanded an answer.

"Oh, no, it isn't that. My wife is very well."

"I'm so glad to hear that."

"Yes, it's very fortunate," Silverman said. "Not that she hasn't been, let's say, a bit less than completely well in the past few weeks. But . . ."

"I beg your pardon," the proprietor said.

"Yes, a bit less than well, I said—but nothing to worry about, really."

"I see, yes," the proprietor said, to encourage him.

"But it's all over now. As a matter of fact, she's been very busy these days—you know, one thing and another. . . . So I decided to spend the evening out."

The proprietor continued to glare at him from across the table, but he said:

"How about getting me a waiter?"

"Of course . . ."

The man turned on his heels, almost upsetting the chair, and snapped his fingers. Immediately a man in a white jacket stood next to Silverman, who said to the proprietor:

"I have a great appetite today. I think I shall order the largest course on the menu."

Still, the proprietor remained there, asking his ridiculous questions:

"Will you have wine . . .? Anything more you'd like . . .?"

"Nothing," Silverman said, to quiet him once and for all.

When the food came he ate voraciously, after his long wait, and rather sloppily, knocking his spoon against his teeth and rattling his plate. The people in the next table—a man, a woman, and three very ugly children—were annoyed. They whispered and pointed to him, or watched him out of the corners of their eyes. But this only increased his desire to make as much noise as

possible. Violently, he set his glass down on a plate. Then he slammed his palm on the table.

The food was good, yet he swallowed it without tasting it, no matter how hard he forced himself to concentrate — and, curiously enough, it did not satisfy him. He swallowed one huge mouthful after another, with a quickness that nauseated him: vegetable soup, a salad, a steak and potatoes, a glass of milk, four slices of bread, thickly buttered, an opulent serving of cheese-cake — all of this, everything tasting the same, exactly the same! He did not remember from one mouthful to the next what he had eaten. When he touched his stomach, as he did two or three times, it felt empty, and he pushed on it with his thumbs to cover the pain with a greater, self-inflicted pain.

As he was finishing, the proprietor returned. He sailed among the tables in his black suit, adjusting a new flower in his button-hole — a white one this time. Silverman was fascinated by his gyrations. But he said nothing.

The man said:

"How did you like your meal?"

And his voice was so childish, so guileless that Silverman could not resist comforting him:

"Very good. Very good . . ."

But he insisted:

"I trust you're satisfied, Mr. Silverman?"

Silverman deliberated with himself for a moment. Then he said: "No."

"No?" said the proprietor, his eyes growing very large with shock.

"No. But it's not your fault. It's just that I'm still hungry," Silverman said.

"Really?"

"Yes, just as before."

Finally, the man sat in the chair across from him. There was a terrible, pitiful concern in his opalescent eyes as he suggested:

"Now, Mr. Silverman, perhaps you'd drink a cordial with me . . .?"

"I've already told you," Silverman said, "that I don't want a drink."

"But what can I get you then?"

"I'll have another dinner," he said.

And the proprietor, rising from the chair, stepped backwards, quickly, but with surprise and gratitude in his eyes.

"It's not," Silverman said, "that I don't like to drink. You mustn't misunderstand me. But it isn't as important to me, now, as eating. Not by a long shot. I'm so hungry that I don't know what to do with myself. Can you believe that? You see, there's never enough food at home."

"I know what you mean," the proprietor said, with that special expression, that brief, understanding wink men reserve for one another when they speak about women.

"Do you?"

"Naturally. My wife is a fanatic, too. A penny-pincher, Mr. Silverman! You should see the meals she serves me. You'd never know we own a restaurant, the way we eat at home . . ."

And he laughed, very loud, until his starched collar began to choke him.

"Exactly . . ." Silverman said.

In a tone as light, as jocular as that of the proprietor, he added:

"My wife eats so daintily that she can't understand why I'm hungry all day long. She doesn't realize she's starving me to death."

"No, of course she doesn't," the proprietor agreed, slapping him on the back once or twice. "There—there's your second dinner. And good luck to you!"

The waiter appeared with several steaming dishes. Silverman ate hastily while the proprietor, who had gone to the far side of the room, occasionally signalled him.

In spite of all his efforts to control himself, he felt himself growing a bit thinner, and hungrier, instead of fuller, each time he brought the fork to his mouth, each time he drank a sip of water, as if the food he swallowed did not really enter his body. He sat quite erect, but he had the impression that he was bent

double, or else, he was closing, as a hand with fingers bent toward the palm — and knuckles hard as stones were rising in his throat. He felt a looseness around his midriff, and placing his hand there, realized that his pants were sagging, that, in fact, they had fallen below his stomach, almost to his thighs. With rigid movements, he tightened his belt, first one notch, then another, to the last notch — but still the pants sagged shapelessly. He attempted to make a hole in the belt with his fork, but the belt was resistant. So he tore it off and threw it on the floor. The people in the next table, including the children, who had been making faces at him, were accustomed to him by then. They paid no attention to him. In his pocket he carried a string which he tied around his waist to support his billowing pants.

Now his arms, too, seemed shorter than he would have expected them to be. He reached across the table for the salt — he had put salt on his food before, with no difficulty. But this time, as he stretched, he was held back, he could not raise his arm far enough above his plate to keep his sleeve clear of the food. So he rolled up both his sleeves. And this disgusted him more than anything else, even more than his hunger and the bitter taste in his mouth.

He was fidgeting with his hands, which would not be quiet, but had been working constantly, on their own, twisting things, prying into everything. And not without success. . . . For when he looked down he saw that he had folded his napkin into the shape of a boat, a perfect boat that lay upon the rumples of the tablecloth as upon a high wave. And in this boat his mind sailed, blindly, for a moment. But then he tore it apart. . . . And he discovered, all of a sudden, that he had raised one corner of the tablecloth and carved a deep line in the table with his knife — a jagged S. Yes, his initial! He put his elbows on it, to disguise it, and clasped his hands together, in front of his eyes, where he could observe them.

He had not been clearly aware, until then, of how long he had stayed in the restaurant. But now — it was past midnight in his pocketwatch, which he had deposited next to his plate — he felt

he had overstayed. The room was half empty. The waiters had all gathered by the kitchen door and were staring at him, staring with the same intensity as the proprietor, and he was embarrassed. The people next to him were staring too—they had turned to him once more. His watch thumped with an extraordinary loud, persistent voice, as if suddenly its mechanism had been bared.

As he pushed back his chair, he happened to see his face in a bottle in the middle of the table . . . and what a strange face it was—shrunken, haggard, with loose tufts of hair waving about as cobwebs, thin, dry lips, and black eyes scarcely wider than knife-blades. "A distorted reflection, nothing more," he told himself, straightening up. But he prepared to flee from that place.

He left money on the table, and as he took a step, and a second step, toward the door, his feet slipped out of his shoes. Nor did he bother to retrieve his shoes. On stockinged feet he proceeded, slowly, without a noise, so light of movement that it seemed if he did not put all his weight on the ground he would float, or jump from table to table—and as he went he seized the legs of chairs to balance himself.

The proprietor was waiting by the door.

"Good-night," he was calling. "Good-night Mr. Silverman . . .!"

His voice was so loud that he must have miscalculated the distance between them. His bright, sharp eyes were inflamed, and he smiled a very curious smile, almost melancholy, and offered his hand. Silverman certainly would have shaken it if he had been able to reach it, but it was suspended far above his head, as a many-pronged chandelier, so he decided to pay no attention to it.

In the street he met a trickle of latecomers to the restaurant, young men and women in very high spirits who walked arm in arm toward him, swaying drunkenly. They formed a closed rank, eight or ten wide, across the sidewalk.

Intentionally, or so it seemed to him, they barred his path, no doubt expecting him to step off the curb to make way for them.

But he was not about to do any such thing. Swiftly, before they could stop him, he slipped under their raised arms and emerged behind them — but realized then, that his precautions had been in vain, for they gave no signs of having noticed him.

"I must walk straighter, much straighter," he said to himself.

And he threw back his shoulders — for his anonymity gave him a very pleasant sensation, a feeling of great companionship toward those people who did not recognize him, ludicrous as this might seem. He heard them laughing and was sure it was him they were laughing at, although they had ignored him previously.

To say the truth, he cut a rather extravagant figure. Would he not have been the first to admit it? His clothes were unbearably cumbersome . . . He dropped his jacket in a doorway, because he could no longer tolerate it. The rest of his things he gathered, as best he could, in his arms and hands: hanging sleeves, loose shirt-tails, buttons large as silver dollars, larger than the palm of his hand. Yet he was threatened with collapse at every step. He lifted his pants under his arms, to secure them . . . But what could he do? The more he twisted about in his clothes, the more disorganized they became . . . they seemed to be knotted in several places. Threads of cloth were unravelling and falling behind him.

A minute later he heard the proprietor running down the street — as if he had not already done enough to free himself from that man!

"Mr. Silverman . . . !" he was calling.

And when he was abreast of him, gasping and puffing, he said:

"Your hat, Mr. Silverman. You forgot it on the table."

He held it out, suspended from the tips of his short, yellowish fingers, and dropped it.

Silverman put it on his head, but it fell below his eyes, almost to his chin.

"Of course, I should have known," he thought, exasperated that he had not spared himself this added humiliation.

"You may have it," he said to the proprietor.

He threw it into the air, and the proprietor caught it before it reached the ground—but then, bending low as if they were surrounded by people and he wanted to be heard only by Silverman, said:

“Won’t you be cold without it?”

“Cold?” Silverman said. “Why should I be cold?”

“Well, after all, your . . . your bald head, shall we call it?” the proprietor said in a very delicate voice.

And he turned away modestly.

But Silverman said:

“I’m not bald.”

No one had ever spoken to him in such a tone before, and he did not know what to make of it.

“Yes, certainly, you are,” said the proprietor.

He was going to return the hat, but Silverman, passing his hand over his head and feeling the bare skin, was too ashamed to remain there. He hurried, as fast as he could in his long socks, down the street.

Alone in the darkness, close to the ground he crept, waist-deep in a shadow, his shadow, that was rising to him from the pavement. Now he felt a great stillness of limb and breath, as if he had fallen asleep—not total sleep, but the beginning, the opening of sleep. He scarcely moved—moved more as a slow, hungry plant, it seemed to him, than as a human being, so deep was his lethargy. He, who had once stood erect, six feet tall, his eyes above those of most men, was reduced to this misery . . .

Only his mind seemed relatively unaffected, perhaps even strengthened. He was more sharply conscious than ever of the objects that surrounded him. Details he had never seen before came to him with great vividness . . . for instance, he noticed for the first time the shape of a grain of cement on a wall he was passing, a wall he had passed hundreds of times. He remembered it only as a wide, solid block. But now he saw innumerable small grains clinging together, and vast black holes between them . . . “A poorly built house,” he thought. He was struck, too, by the irregularities of the sidewalk, which he had always believed was

smooth and well-kept. How blind he had been! There were crags steep as precipices, so steep that he had to circle around them. "Tomorrow," he said to himself, "I shall file a complaint with the municipality." And he advanced a few steps, dragging his clothes, which seemed to have become long, heavy chains.

He saw a man with very large black shoes walking down the street toward him, and, instantly, he moved out of the way, in the absurd fear that he would be tramped on. He repeated to himself more than once as he hid in a doorway, "Why, I'm as big as the next man . . ." But what difference did that make? Still, the large shoes descended, again and again, on the cobblestones, with a deafening clatter . . . where exactly, he did not know . . . he could not see them. . . . No, but he felt the vibrations of the heels on his temples. Then he withdrew. He crept along the walls of familiar houses that had become unfamiliar. He humped at each turn, as shadows do—so quickly had he learned his business!

When he reached his house, with great difficulty he mounted the steps to the front door, still dragging his shirt-tails two or three steps behind him, a long stream of white material, not unlike a bridal train.

Halfway up, something struck his stomach and knocked him over. He lay on his back with an object heavy as a millstone on top of him. "The pocket-watch," he remembered all of a sudden.

And, turning over on one side, gently, he allowed it to roll out of his pants, down the steps to the ground, where it lay unbroken.

Then he removed his pants, which had become an unnecessary burden, considering that his shirt alone covered him from head to foot.

He stopped on the landing to rest—because he was uncertain whether or not he should go in. "I won't just yet," he thought. "First I'll sit here and read for a while." The evening paper, he knew, was always deposited just inside the door . . . if only he could reach it. . . . He put his arm through the mail-slot at the

foot of the door. But he could not find the paper, it was far beyond his fingertips—so he climbed through the slot himself, holding the metal flap open with one arm. At least that he had sufficient strength to do . . . !

From the edge of the slot to the floor it was a steep jump, but he landed on his feet—now that he had removed most of his clothes he was extraordinarily agile. Inside, he searched for the newspaper, which was nowhere to be seen at first. He was standing on a black surface—he could not see beyond it. . . . But then he realized he was on the newspaper. He had his feet in the center of a large photograph. From there he went to the edge and lowered himself from one corner, which bent, tossing him backwards. He descended into something soft that rose to his ankles—a thick sheet of dust. He lifted a handful of it to his face, to identify it, and then threw it away with repulsion. He sank his feet into the dust, which gathered between his toes, tearing his skin . . . he felt that he was bleeding. But he had to gain a sure footing. He could not be expected to give up—not now that he had come so far! “I must have this floor swept,” he thought, with a good deal of annoyance that his wife had been so neglectful. “She must have done it on purpose, to trap me.” Then he went down the hallway, avoiding the larger particles of dust, which were as gross as pebbles, to the door of his room.

There he found the woman asleep in bed, naked, one arm hanging over the edge of the bed—as always . . . because since her illness she was always hot, she could not stand to have anything on her. Her mouth was partly open, her beautiful hair spread on the pillow, flowing gently as a stream. The hair seemed even more beautiful and richer than before. It had grown in the space of a few hours. It lay across her chest, as far down as her stomach. This he saw, for her stomach was covered by nothing but hair—she had not even drawn the sheets up, she was so careless about herself. Her fat, voluptuous skin rose and fell with her breathing, rose each time a bit more than it fell, so that with every passing moment she was larger, fatter, more voluptuous—yes, each time there was more of that huge, childless, pregnant

body of hers. There was no room for him on the bed, but he hoisted himself with a corner of the sheet on to her stomach, which now seemed to fill the whole room, as if he were inside it, not on top of it. He could feel her strong, hot blood coursing through her veins and his, and, as he laid his head upon her chest, drawing him in with a soft, sucking motion. Asleep, her hand surrounded him. Beneath her he lay, a phantom cupped in her embrace, and a hunger of years, of a lifetime, in his lips. Such a terrible, bitter hunger . . . ! And flesh so sweet, he felt, touched his face, that he was going to put his lips to it, to taste it. . . . But as he bent over, very far over, he no longer felt it—he felt nothing, not even himself, only the weight of his bones sinking, sinking into her breasts, to the bottom of her.



• CHRISTOPHER WATERS

FULL SPACE

My infant girl waned on my wish
To have a son, an English boy
With page-bob hair and sailor suit
Who played with sand and smiled as can
An infant man, while young girls cry.
No more shall I behold those eyes
That widely stared except at those
That stared at them, no more shall bear
Her to a glass to stop her tears
And make her smile, no more at night
Shall I go in and lay my hand
Upon her back and hear her sigh
Immersed in sleep. The toy I bought
Too soon for her now lies aside
At once wrecked by my conjured son;
I wound it once when she was near
But she shrank back in sudden fear
Before a squirrel so full of noise.
Nor could she grasp the half-grown cat
I brought to her; its playing claws
Did not seem gloved to her soft skin.
Now her low coos at waking hour
Somewhere disperse far from where she
Once used to be. Somewhere in space
Her laughter swirls, her glee to spy
Me coming home in need of joy.
Nowhere is she. Instead, a son
Plays in the shade of sweet no one.

• TRACY THOMPSON

GRANDFATHER

Grandfather, on his way to our village
From his trip to Japan,
Stopped to show us the gifts
He'd there received at the Emperor's court:
Some old poems on ricepaper, tied in a bundle
Like a scroll, with a ribbon, inscribed, and
A kimono, a tasseled sword, some old maps,
Some old books of Japanese novels.
Had he learned the language? No,
He'd learned a few words, could write
Some signs and symbols learned there,
His mind was full of images he'd gleaned
And gathered, like a harvest, like wheat
And barley grain and rye, oats and corn,
And we thought of a harvest, we thought
Of boats on a river, sampans, these pictures
Communicated from his mind to ours,
We said someday we'd like to go there,
Felt somehow we'd seen and been there,
Because of his telling us village children,
Gathered under the tree, grandfather's hat
Large to shade from the intense sun, his stick
(Like the sword?) and his coat (like
The kimono?) and his sheaf of papers.
We cried a little when he went away again.

AND SUN

Was it scrapings on a bone you'd hear?
This is a painful sound, feeling.
It produces a wry music, panicked sometimes,
But a music, remembering birds, song, love
And the love of song.

We rest a moment.

Now we must gather joy, spill it on paper
For it should not be lost forever. Moods
Are precious, are insights of a kind, can be
Precise as definitions, if rendered truly,
Accurately. A kind of knowledge.

Once more.

Desire was willing that we should say this,
Love was more than willing, beauty consented.
The heart set the scene: blue mountains,
We heard the lark's call (or was it the robin's)
As from a distance, the steeple was plain
Above the tableland flatness, the sea from afar
Sounded through a slight gloom of fog, foghorn
Sounded, we knew the boats would be coming in,
They'd bring things from other shores, probably,
There'd be stories, gay or bitter sailors, wind-
Sound, galesound often, tensings and strivings,
Mutterings, lamentations, whistles of joy or
Sorrow, and all that the sea brings. And sun.

• JOHN TAYLOR

ONE DAY MORE TO BREMERHAVEN

The bony cliffs of chalk
Rose in the open port;
Watching, we stilled our talk
And stared without resort.

Beyond the wrinkled sea
Stood England's passing edge,
And books were all that we
Knew of that sliding wedge.

Here masts without a ship
Projected from the wave
To show a pilot's slip
Had led her to her grave.

And where the cliffs rose higher
And green rolled at their crown,
Their twins of wire and steel
Were planted on the down

To send from shore to salt
Whatever word that would
Prevent a pilot's fault
Or make his error good.

We heard no sound of England's,
We saw no other place
Beyond the Goodwin Sands
Except the cliff's blank face.

With land and danger gone
The boat still seemed to flee
Through all the day, alone
Into the cold North Sea.

• ROBERT GRANT BURNS

THE BACK-HOLE

They're digging graves with machines, now. Called a
back-hole, tractor-fashion, it
is driven to dig, geared to the whims
and demands of our society, in record time, graves
four feet deep, thirty-six inches wide — regulation size.

A pit of clay for to be
made For such a guest is meet. But can
he be called a sexton who throws no skulls up, while he sings?
Poor Yorick, a clown himself, at last heard another clown

sing. The problem is one of
water: even the old graves hold it,
after rain, like a blister, like a ceramic birdbath;
if digged too near, another coffin may float into your

new-made grave, or the back-hole
itself may slip, front wheels over
the edge — which delays the process, but it gets you buried.
I remember the diggers at MacDougal's burial.
It rained that day. The old, poetic rain.

• DAVID YOUNG

THE MAN WHO SWALLOWED A BIRD

Happened when he was yawning.
A black or scarlet bird went down his throat
And disappeared, and at the time
He only looked foolish, belched a feather;
The change took time.

But when we saw him again in the
Half-dusk of a summer evening
He was a different man. His eyes
Glittered and his brown hands
Lived in the air like swallows;
Knowledge of season lit his face
But he seemed restless. What he said
Almost made sense, but from a distance:

Once I swallowed a bird.
Felt like a cage at first, but now
Sometimes my flesh flutters and I think
I could go mad for joy.

In the fall he vanished. South
Some said, others said dead. Jokes
About metamorphosis were made. Nonetheless
Some of us hear odd songs.

Suppose
You press your ear against the morning air,
Above and on your left you might
Hear music that implies without a word
A world where a man can absorb a bird.

• RICHARD C. RAYMOND

ENIGMAS YOU LEFT FOR ME

Over and over, Eddie, I think about
The August afternoon we took the girls
For a drive in your father's bouncy wagon, along
The old wood road from the farm to the hemlock grove,
With all of us squeezed in a row on the single seat,
And the horses made such loud and impolite noises
Right in front of our four faces. We squirmed
And blushed, we shuffled our feet and bit our lips,
Till you were the first to laugh, as always, which made
Me laugh, and even the girls—with some restraint.
Perhaps you never recalled that afternoon,
Any more than I, once we'd left town; but now
For five years I have tried to reconcile
Our laughter amid the rattle of wheels on gravel,
The dripping smell of pine,
And the questioning way of the girls on the prickly straw
Under the swooping of swallows,
With death by your own hand, alone on a wet
And windy night in a dark unhappy house.

DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN

THE FIRST FULL PROFESSOR OF IRONOLOGY IN THE WORLD

by WAYNE BOOTH

Editors' Note: Professor Booth is in Rome for a few months. This article is substituted for the regular Dept. of American, which will be resumed in our next issue.

Unlike many revolutionaries in the history of thought, I am determined to claim no more than is my just due. Ironology did not spring full-blown from the head of Zeus, and it is now very difficult indeed to determine *where* the first faint glimmerings appeared. I shall have more to say of other claimants later, but for now the important point for us all to keep in mind is that it was not until 1948 (I remember the day and the hour) that I saw what had been wrong with all previous studies of irony, even my own.¹

The day was December 11, 1948, the hour was 11:00 a.m.—a time of day when I am, modestly be it said, at my best. I was reading Edmund Wilson's commentary on his own earlier agreement with Edna Kenton's claim that it is the governess, not the children, whom we see trafficking with evil in "The Turn of the Screw." In "Henry James to the Ruminant Reader"—how many ruminants were to spring from her suggestion she could hardly have guessed!—Miss Kenton had written (1924): "So she [the governess] made the shades of her recurring fevers dummy figures for the delirious terrifying of others, pathetically trying to harmonize her own disharmonies by creating discords outside herself." Wilson had then written (1934): "The governess who is made to tell the story is a neurotic case of sex repression, and . . . the ghosts are not real ghosts but hallucinations of the governess."

In reading Wilson's 1948 footnote I was at first horrified to see signs of a recantation of his 1934 argument. He begins by admitting, somewhat grudgingly, that several scholars had used those 14 years

¹As I am always telling my staff, irony is irony, old-fashioned study of irony is old-fashioned study of irony, and ironology is ironology. But more of this later.

to poke some gaping holes in the Kenton-Wilson thesis. He confesses that he had "forced a point in trying to explain away the passage in which the housekeeper identifies, from the governess' description, the male apparition with Peter Quint." What's more, he admits that James's statements in the notebooks are hard to reconcile with Wilson's earlier allegations about the sex life of the governess. When I read this, my heart sank, as well it might. Much of my own work in the interim had been based on the unquestioned assumption that Wilson's Freudian reading had been sound. If the governess should prove, after all, to be a reliable witness to the children's fate, where was I to turn? I had not long to worry, however; within two paragraphs my new life was opened to me. "The doubts that some readers feel as to the soundness of the governess' story are, I believe, the reflection of James's doubts, *communicated unconsciously by himself*. . . . One is led to conclude that, in *The Turn of the Screw*, not merely is the governess self-deceived, but that *James is self-deceived about her*."²

It may be difficult for many of my readers to understand the sense of exhilaration with which I read and re-read that passage. The basic principles that it embodies have become so much a part of our heritage that younger readers may have difficulty in reconstructing how we pioneers felt at a time when we had not yet seen our path through the wilderness ahead. Even now I encounter sincere disciples who are distinctly hazy about their methodology; indeed, one of the purposes of this essay is to lay down, once and for all, the methodological distinctions that I first saw clearly on Dec. 11, 1948. We have nothing to lose, and everything to gain, by rooting out from our midst those who would, by simple old-fashioned explications of straightforward irony—by imitating, in 1960, the sort of thing I was doing in the thirties!—climb on to our bandwagon.³ But back to Wilson.

What I saw on that December morning was that there are not one, not two, but *three* levels of dealing with irony. About the first, perhaps we have said enough, since the less said the better. Each of the other two has its proper set of principles, and the practice of either entitles a man, in my view, to membership in the newly formed IIII (my own role in organizing the Independent International Ironologists Incorporated is not important here). For convenience, we can use Wilson as our guide.

² That Wilson has since repudiated his repudiation [1959] is, I think, irrelevant to our purposes here.

³ At the risk of seeming to repeat myself, may I point out once more that ironology is ironology?

LEVEL II (Wilson, 1934):

The principle appropriate to this level is so simple, so easily followed, that almost anyone can hope to do fine things with it.

Principle I: NO IRONIES ARE WORTH WRITING ABOUT UNLESS THEY HAVE GONE UNNOTICED BY ALL OR MOST PREVIOUS READERS.

Corollary I: THE MOST ARTISTIC IRONISTS ARE THOSE WHO DECEIVE THE MOST READERS.

Now this level offers a good deal, and I think no one can deny that the principle and its corollary have been seminal. From the simple motive of seeing in a work what no one else has ever seen has sprung, we may modestly claim, more books and articles than from any other single source. And that is no mean achievement. But too many of us, as I shall show below, have rested at this stage. We are surely now ready — many more of us than in the past — to move resolutely to Level III.

LEVEL III (Wilson, 1948):

Principle II: THE MOST IMPORTANT IRONIES ARE THOSE THE AUTHOR HIMSELF NEVER SUSPECTED.

Corollary II: THE MOST ARTISTIC IRONISTS ARE THOSE WHO DECEIVE THEMSELVES.

No one who takes an honest look at Levels II and III can wonder for long about my excitement in 1948. Though ironology had been in the air for at least three decades, and though many honest practitioners had already done excellent work (as we have discovered in retrospect), no one, not even Wilson himself, had seen the full picture. *I* saw the full picture, and I acted. It was as simple as that. The incontestable facts that I founded the first Department of Ironology, that my Department is still the largest and best Department of Ironology in the world, and that I am still head of that Department, despite repeated petty attacks and base maneuvers from the Departments of English, Comparative Literature, Philosophy, and Psychology — these facts, I say, attest, surely, though in a gross, material way, to the importance of that December morning.

II

More significant, of course, is the question of how I did it. But that is a question for another essay. The long story of how I obtained approval to change the name from Department of Irony to Department of Ironology, of how I managed to drop from my staff all those who insisted on discussing Horace and Juvenal and Erasmus and Swift in the traditional terms, replacing them with farsighted men who saw the challenge of this absolutely new discipline — this story must be told elsewhere. But I trust that the reader will not feel impatient if I spend a few words more in documenting the fine work being done by my colleagues in this new field. I cannot claim that all of those I shall quote are members of my own staff, but my knowledgeable readers will no doubt be able to save me the embarrassment of pointing out that the *best* ones are.

Item: Anyone who doubts the importance of "The Turn of the Screw" in the formation of Ironology needs only to look at the burst of creative energy that was produced by the Kenton-Wilson thesis. The fact is that "The Turn of the Screw" is the only short story (albeit a long one) in the history of the world to have a whole book published about it: A CASEBOOK ON HENRY JAMES'S "THE TURN OF THE SCREW," ed. by Gerald Willen.⁴ The very existence of this book, made up as it is of readings and re-readings of the gov-

⁴The suggestion of one of my colleagues, that Willen is an unconscious misprint for Wilson, is I think far-fetched. erness's character, shows beyond question the *seminal* quality of the two basic principles. At the risk of offending others equally deserving of quotation, like Cargill and Goddard, let me quote briefly from Willen's own imaginative Introduction — just to show what can be done once a critic frees himself from the traditional standards of relevant proof:

Is it possible, then, that Douglas is Miles? That the governess, in love with Miles (Douglas), and unable to act in the situation, herself wrote a story, a fiction? And, finally, that Douglas as a child, as well as a young man down from Trinity, was in love with the governess? These implications may be inferred from the story, although Douglas's precise relationship to the governess is not closely defined. But even if there is an understated connection between Douglas and the governess, the interpretations developed by various critics are not necessarily invalidated. For the essential fact remains that the story told by the governess needs to be read at varying levels. This is all the more true if we say that her story is, in effect, a fiction.

On the other hand, ruling out the possibility of an ulterior motive (involving Douglas) on the part of the governess, we may still maintain that her manuscript is not a true story at all, that it is a work of fiction she had already committed to paper before relating orally [*sic*] to Douglas. Or she may have made it up as she went along and then

written it down. Whatever "The Turn of the Screw" is, however, a "true story" or a fiction, it still retains all its challenges.

I think it will be clear that Willen has here made explicit two more corollaries that have underlain all of our best work:

Corollary III: THE MORE "VARYING LEVELS" A STORY PRESENTS, THE MORE CHALLENGES, AND THE MORE CHALLENGES THE BETTER THE STORY.

Corollary IV: THE MORE HYPOTHESES THROWN UP BY THE DREDGING CRITIC, THE BETTER THE CRITIC (AND, WE CAN INFER FROM THESE IMPLICATIONS, THE BETTER THE STORY).

In introducing the next few items, I must admit to one major weakness still to be found in many of my staff, despite my repeated warnings: they still are a bit inclined to seek for explicit evidence *in the works*, and they still find themselves—how true this is in all new disciplines!—relapsing into the old mode—that is, in this case, explicating ironies that were consciously and deliberately intended. I have sent memo after memo describing the *intentional fallacy*, but it is a many-hydrated monster indeed. Nevertheless I think that I can point with pride to the following efforts, selected from among dozens of first-class, genuinely fresh interpretations.

Item: It is quite natural that a good deal of work should have been done in extending the Kenton-Wilson work on James. I cite only one study, a recent re-reading of *The American* by John A. Clair. Prof. Clair's suggestion that Claire (I make no comment on this strange coincidence of names) de Cintre is the illegitimate daughter of Mrs. Bread, that both Newman and the Marquise are blackmailed by Mrs. Bread, and that Newman, in all his rather brutal "opacity," is "saved" by the Bellegardes and Claire and victimized by his ostensible "friend"—this complex suggestion, has I say, almost everything to recommend it: (1) Nobody has ever thought of it before. (2) It answers beautifully, as Prof. Clair emphasizes, to James's plea for the "one reader out of a hundred" with enough critical acumen to catch his subtle clues. Each reader who accepts the new reading has at least ninety-nine others to look down on. (3) If accepted, it will require everyone to repudiate every part of his previous experience of the novel; every character, every event, must be re-evaluated.

I am happy to say that almost every narrator or central intelligence in James has been subjected to this same kind of rigorous scrutiny and found guilty of faults that earlier readers had overlooked. I cite only the splendid recent work in cutting Pemberton,

of "The Pupil," down to size. Generations of readers have been wrong in blaming the parents for the pupil's death. The real villain is the tutor, Pemberton—though perhaps only in what one critic calls an "existential sense." I might just mention that I hired Charles Nieder, John Hagopian, and William Bysshe Stein *en bloc* for their combined work in proving Pemberton both an unconscious homosexual and an unconscious murderer.

Item: Still inclined to talk about conscious artistry but otherwise impeccable is James Hafley, in "The Villain in *Wuthering Heights*." The villain, he tells us, is really Nelly Dean, the second narrator. I am especially impressed by the tenacity with which Mr. Hafley adheres to the *a priorism* of Principle I: Nobody has ever seriously suspected Nelly Dean before.

Item: G. Wilson Knight's *Metamorphoses*-job on Hamlet and Claudius. Mr. Knight is not really clear about whether Shakespeare *consciously* made Claudius more admirable than any of us had thought. But otherwise his whole treatment is a model of ironology. "It is," he tells us, "a nihilistic birth in the consciousness of Hamlet that spreads its deadly venom around. That Hamlet is originally blameless, that the King is originally guilty, may well be granted. But, if we refuse to be diverted from a clear vision by questions of praise and blame, responsibility and causality, and watch only the actions and reactions of the persons as they appear, we shall observe a striking reversal of the usual commentary." This is ironology almost at its best. The striking reversal (Principle I) is good, though it would be better if it were clearly a reversal of which Shakespeare himself was said to be unconscious. As it is, however, we have a fine bit of originality,—a stroke that is sure to prove a fructifying one—in Knight's request that we suspend our temptations to praise and blame, in order to come to a disinterested "admiration" for Claudius: "he is distinguished by creative and wise action, a sense of purpose, benevolence, a faith in himself and those around him, by love of his Queen." There is an extremely subtle distinction here between "praise and blame," which we are to avoid, and our sense of approbation for Claudius and disapprobation for the "cynical" Hamlet who is "a poison in the midst of the healthy bustle of the court." It is clear, from the overall effect of Knight's essay, that he has brought to a fine point both a principle and a corollary we have not yet enunciated:

Principle III: THE SUBTLER THE BETTER.

Corollary V: IN IRONOLOGY, THERE IS always A SUBTLE DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN A CRITICAL TECHNIQUE WHEN USED BY YOUR ADVERSARY (IN THIS CASE, TERMS OF PRAISE AND BLAME) AND THAT SAME TECHNIQUE WHEN USED BY THE IRONOLOGIST. IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, IT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOOD CRITICISM AND BAD.

Item: Leslie Fiedler, *passim*. I like especially his attack on Blair's work on Twain, for being *only* sound, when what we needed was a book to "outrage" us.

Item: The many splendid re-readings of Gulliver we have seen in recent years. In some respects the daring repudiation of the Houyhnhnms by Ehrenpreis and others, the bold deductive assurance that extreme rationality *must* be an object of satire, is perhaps one of the supreme achievements of ironology. Nothing could be more ridiculous than the insistence by Sherburn, Crane and others that before scoffing at the Houyhnhnms we should consider such matters as how Swift's contemporaries looked at them; or how Swift's other writings relate to the fourth book of Gulliver; or how an ironic view of the rationality they represent can be made to fit the attitudes of Swift and his contemporaries toward reason. Incidentally, I was appalled to note, at the 1959 MLA, that Ehrenpreis seemed to be retreating from his originally bold position on this matter. His surrender of Principle I was redeemed, however, by what seemed to be an application of Principle II: as he admitted that Swift did not *intend* to make fun of reason as viewed in the Houyhnhnms, he moved toward the claim that unconsciously Swift had anticipated our twentieth-century views. I may as well admit, nevertheless, that his speech did lead me to withdraw my offer of an associate professorship.

But it is embarrassing to go on in this vein, honoring so few when so many deserve honor. The injustice can be justified only if, through these brief citations, my readers come to feel that what these men have done, others can also do — given a solid conviction about the principles and a determined application to those many works that have not yet been re-read in the new way.

III

The question remains, "Where *do* we go from here?" It would not be fair to my colleagues for me to reveal the scope of their works-in-progress, though some of them have themselves given veiled hints in the annual *PMLA* bibliography. I *can* give some idea of the possibilities open to us by copying the table of contents of my new book, *The Secret Eiron: A Dialectic of Distant Personae*, to be published by Paradox Press this fall.

Chapter I: The Unreliable Narrator in *Paradise Lost*

- II: Squire *Allworthy*?
- III: Dilsey — or Who Castrated Benjy?
- IV: Alyosha, The Androgynous Saint
- V: No Crime, No Punishment?
- VI: Pap as Jim: The Father Surrogate in Blackface
- VII: Ishmael, the Secret Owner of the Pequod
- VIII: "A" for A.? New Light on Hawthorne
- IX: Regan Vindicated: Responsibility and Piety in *Lear*
- X: The Gothic Integrity of Becky Sharpe
- XI: Duplicitous Eliot. The Hidden Satanism of *Four Quartets*
- XII: Jesus Christ: A Revaluation

IV

With the last two chapters, it will be clear that I am moving into a new dimension in criticism. I need not try to hide the fact that I have been asking myself, for a long time: "Why confine ironology to imaginative literature?" I find no good answer to this question. On the contrary, if fruitful results can serve as a criterion in such matters, I find every reason for suspecting that until recently everyone in all areas has taken everyone and everything too straight. Few seem to have suspected the new reading delights that can come when one has at last seen that Adam Smith, say, meant something else entirely. Following this lead, my next book has chapters on Socrates ("The Hemlock Ploy"), Aristotle ("The Inner Metaphysic: Five Causes"), Copernicus ("Geocentrism Disguised"), and a dozen others, leading up to "The Aesthetic Absolutism Implicit in Einstein's Ontology."

It is perhaps premature of me to suggest the next step after that, but I cannot resist pointing out a very real sense in which God is proving to be the great ironologist. I hinted in my opening paragraph that I see ironology as the discipline of disciplines. Now I am not yet prepared to go so far as to suggest that I have been explicitly chosen to see the Irony of Ironies, and to reveal in doing so the Supreme Ironologist, but it may come to that.

Meanwhile, with converts coming our way in droves, with more students than the department can handle, with a higher percentage of articles per man than any other department, in any subject, in this or any other country, and with a consequent \$5,000 raise for next year, I feel that my most seminal years are yet ahead.

ANOTHER TRUE MOMENT IN AMERICAN ACADEMIC HISTORY

A professor I know, who claims that he is always on the point of being found out as a fraud, is telling the following story, these days, with great ambiguity and pathos.

He was interrupted recently in class by the one student—a highly self-possessed young lady—who had an air of seeing through his defenses most clearly.

"Do you think that the theory of evil advanced here is the same as the one described by Henry James in *The Nature of Evil*?"

"Henry James?"

"Yes."

"*The Nature of Evil*?"

"Yes."

"Well, ah, I guess I don't just happen to know that essay. I don't, I didn't really think that Henry James . . ."

"It's a book."

"Oh, yes. A book. By Henry James? You sure you're not thinking of his brother, William J—"

"No, Henry James."

"Well," smiling courageously, "I never heard of it." Pause for effect. "Unfortunately, the fact that I never heard of it doesn't prove that it doesn't exist." Smiles, one or two sympathetic titters.

After class, the professor checked the handy bibliographies, and was delighted to discover that he had been right: no such title. On the student's next paper, he added a note: "If I had mentioned a questionable title in class, and if *my* professor had quite graciously declined to press his conviction that the book did not exist, I would have gone immediately to the library to check my own memory. Did you find the book by Henry James?"

Next day he received a note, handwritten on notepaper with the embossed college seal. "Right after the class in which I referred to H. James' *The Nature of Evil*, I went to the library and confirmed my reference. I had not informed you of this confirmation because it seemed to me that to do so, would have been either to insult you or to show more precocity than even I care to show. Since you ask, the books in our library are: *The Nature of Evil*, #216:J28, and *Substance and Shadow*, #201:J27. Respectfully yours,_____."

He was crushed. How could he answer *that*? The girl had been right. He typed out a humble apology, and threw it away. Surely humility before such arrogance was not the proper stance. Yet he had been wrong.

Then, incredibly late, the light dawned: Henry James, Sr.! Died 1882. Joyful, the professor spent a full day meditating upon the *coup de grace*. Then he sent this note:

"I thought we were talking about Henry James, the novelist. Henry James, Jr. I wouldn't really have felt insulted if you had come to tell me that you had confused father with son."

He has said nothing about the girl's response. Obviously he prefers to leave it on the note of *his* triumph.

WAYNE BOOTH



REVIEWS

Stavrogin In Paris

THE POSSESSED

by ALBERT CAMUS

Translated by JUSTIN O'BRIEN.

Alfred A. Knopf. 1960 \$3.50

Dostoevsky's most violent and most complex novel, *The Devils*, better known in English as *The Possessed*, was first published in 1871-72. It was intended as an attack on the Westernizing liberals of the day whose ideas, Dostoevsky argued, were as inimical to the well-being of the true Russian as the exorcised devils were to the well-being of the Gadarene swine (Luke viii, 32-7 is the epigraph of the book). Since that time there have been several attempts to turn it into a play, although the author himself is on record as doubting that the job could be done successfully. Replying to an enthusiastic princess, who applied for permission to dramatize the novel while it was still being serialized, he gave his consent with some misgivings. "The epic [novel] form never quite fits into the dramatic form," he observed sagely; his advice, rather half-heartedly given, was that she should dramatize a single episode from his book, or else take its "basic idea" and treat it in a new way.

Although it opened to critical acclaim in Paris, in January, 1959, Camus' stage version of *The Possessed* proves how well-founded Dostoevsky's misgivings were. Like other astute men of the theater before him, Camus was beguiled by the ease with which the Russian characters can be visualized, and by the carefully constructed dialogues, seemingly waiting only to be divided into acts and scenes. In all of Dostoevsky's novels a playwright's task seems already half completed. In actuality the dramatic elements present tend to obscure the truth, that the extremely complicated and tortuous lines of action make the task an almost impossible one.

The sad history of Dostoevsky in the theater is the best proof of how unadaptable these apparently promising plays really are. Almost all of the novels have been dramatized and every dramatization has failed on the stage. To give a few examples, Stanislavsky's treatment of *The Possessed* (1913) had over a hundred rehearsals but had to be withdrawn after forty-five performances. Nemirovich-Danchenko and Jacques Copeau have both attempted *The Brothers*

Karamazov, but although both versions have been popular in their respective theaters, neither is more than a series of events from the novel forced into dramatic form (it was in Copeau's version that Camus acted Ivan in Algiers, in the thirties). Even *Crime and Punishment*, the most direct and hence perhaps the most dramatizable of the major works, has never really been successfully staged. Rodney Ackland's 1946 version, the best to date, succeeded only partially; earlier attempts were grotesque failures. There were three of these current in English around the turn of the century, but despite the efforts of three leading actors, Richard Mansfield, E. H. Sothorn, and Laurence Irving, each production was a disaster (the titles of these early efforts — *The Fool Hath Said in His Heart*, "*There is No God*," and *The Story of Rodion the Student* — can hardly have aided them at the box office).

It had better be said immediately that as a play Camus' stage version of *The Possessed* shares most of the flaws of its predecessors, and has some new ones of its own. He has attempted a mediation between the novel and the drama. The result is an uneasy compromise which preserves some of the formal conventions of the novel and at the same time tries to heed Dostoevsky's advice to bring out as clearly as possible "the basic ideas."

This preservation is hardly as revolutionary as some of Camus' critics seem to think. In practice it simply means that there is an attempt to maintain some of the fluidity of prose narrative by using a certain amount of non-illusory staging, direct address to the audience, scenes played before the curtain, and the like, all of them devices necessary in a complex play of twenty-two scenes (cut to twenty in performance). Only a critic who had never heard of Thornton Wilder or of Bertolt Brecht could have grumbled, as one did on opening night, "Elizabethan theater — all very well if you're an Elizabethan."

Many of these devices are used well enough, but the most important of them, the narrator (retained from the novel, whose narrator, in turn, is partly an imitation of the Chronicler in Pushkin's tragedy, *Boris Godunov*), is handled so clumsily that the whole play is weakened. Dostoevsky's narrator is a puzzled and confused man living through a puzzling and confusing series of events. He is fussy, timid, credulous and ignorant. And, although he is the narrator, he is seldom entirely sure of what is going on. For this, the most chaotic of his novels, Dostoevsky wisely decided on a narrator who was not omniscient, the better to reflect the bafflement of the respectable citizens of the remote town where outrageous events take place. Much of this essential bafflement and sense of confusion is lost in reading Camus' version. Even more must be lost in production, for

at times the narrator's function causes him to dominate the stage, omniscient as he never is in the novel. Inevitably he appears to be holding the whole thing together, an impression that Dostoevsky carefully excluded from his book. There the narrator stumbles in and out of his tale; he is a clouded pane interposed between the reader and the action. Sometimes he interprets events, but often he does so incorrectly, thus helping to maintain our confusion and impatience. It is one of the most brilliant manipulations of point of view in literature. But in this stage version the narrator is an explanatory device and little more. He is present but he is barely a character. His muddle, when expressed, becomes merely irritating as we see events a few moments later with our own eyes; he seems a colorless simpleton rather than an honestly puzzled man.

Of course, the whole narrative machinery of the novel is exceedingly complex, and so dangerous to tamper with. Like a cubist painter who tries to show on one plane an object as it would appear from several different viewpoints, Dostoevsky tries to show us a series of differing views of a character or situation. Stavrogin and the strange goings-on that attend his presence in the town are viewed through various eyes. The townsfolk exchange rumours about him, his mother broods, to the cracked Maria he is a kind of saint, to his fanatical followers a philosopher-king, the narrator industriously gathers contradictory accounts of everything he does, and he gives his own view of himself when he confesses to Bishop Tihon. It is perilous to disturb the delicate arrangement which holds in balance these different glimpses of an enigmatic character and events.

Camus' dramatic technique has thus failed at rendering *The Possessed* in a new genre. Philosophically he has not been much more successful. He has attempted to follow Dostoevsky's advice and to isolate the basic ideas; by concluding that they are 1) suicide, and 2) Stavrogin, he is guilty of seriously oversimplifying his source.

It is not surprising that the author who proclaimed, in the first sentence of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, that "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide," should attribute excessive importance to the self-destructing creed of the engineer Kirilov, but suicide is only one of Dostoevsky's concerns in the novel. To consider it as the chief one is to simplify his position too much.

A further simplification is to center the novel more squarely on Stavrogin than Dostoevsky was willing to do. Stavrogin is a symptom, a violent one to be sure, of certain evils that Dostoevsky saw in the Russia of his day, but he is only one symptom. In a deliberate parody of the Trinity there are actually three major figures in the book—Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky, the aging dabbler in

liberalism, a survivor from the eighteen-forties; Peter, his Mephistophelian son, who conspires for the sake of confusion; and Stavrogin, the hollow man, the young nobleman who is already empty and dead spiritually. Of the three, Stepan, the exorcised man of the epigraph, is perhaps the most adequately analyzed. Indeed it is he who represents the real "basic idea" which is, as Dostoevsky wrote the future Alexander III when dedicating the book to him, the origin of Russian anarchy and nihilism in the theorizing of the liberals, or, more generally, the ultimate responsibility of the theorist for the practical application of his ideas — an idea more recently explored in France by Gide and by Simone Weil. Stepan is of Dostoevsky's own generation and his career follows that of his creator in his youthful dallying with Western ideas. But unlike Dostoevsky he escapes from the purges of 1848. Frightened but not arrested he retires to live out his life as a public monument on the estate of Stavrogin's mother, thus missing, as Dostoevsky did not, the regenerative effects of Siberian imprisonment. Because he is not punished he does not repent; instead his liberal ideas infect others — his son, his pupils Stavrogin and Lisa, and his disciples, the weak intellectuals of the town. Because of these ideas all come to disaster; only Peter, already damned, escapes to conspire another day. But Stepan himself is finally saved. Unlike the others who are "possessed", his demon of liberalism is exorcised by contact with Holy Russia in the person of the Gospel-seller (in the play this important figure is replaced by a vague intimation that Stepan has talked to some peasants and somehow been converted), and he dies repentant and at peace. Camus pays some attention to all of this in the final scenes of the play but it does not really emerge as a major theme.

In its place he offers us the fall of a Stavrogin at once more enigmatic and more understandable than the original. He is more enigmatic because his fall takes place without any serious reference to the metaphysical concerns which are essential to Dostoevsky's novel, more understandable because in restoring the so-called "suppressed" chapter to its place Camus chooses to explain most of Stavrogin's aberrations as remorse for the violation of a child, a child he drove to suicide. This violation is an expression rather than the cause of Stavrogin's state of mind. In the suppressed chapter (suppressed, incidentally, only to those unable to scrape together \$1.45 for the Modern Library edition of the novel) he confesses his crime to the saintly Bishop Tihon; the introduction of this confession into the play as an important scene, and its strong dramatic position at the end of Part II, gives far too much emphasis to the episode. It becomes the key to Stavrogin's character and as a result the whole latter part of the play seems to depend from this confession and to

evolve all too simply from the facts set forth in it rather than from the complex of causes that Dostoevsky intended.

Furthermore, the confession scene is dramatically weak, since the most important episode must necessarily be narrated rather than shown. The theater has not yet reached that stage of anarchy where the violation of a little girl can be presented before a paying audience. And since this cannot be done, why depend on the episode at all, especially when Dostoevsky thought so little of its importance that he chose to omit it from the published novel. In fact Dostoevsky's narrator, in his bumbling way, even suggests that the whole atrocious story is untrue. Finally, Stavrogin's decision to marry the crippled idiot, Maria, is explained a bit too patly in the confession scene as the result of a desire to perform some penance for this crime, and thus the marriage becomes one in a chain of events leading to an orderly if tragic conclusion rather than one of many parallel symptoms of a restless and unhappy spirit bent on "living ironically."

I have said that it is unwise to place on the stage the confession scene partly because it is less relevant than Camus seems to think and partly because, as a long narration, it is inherently undramatic. Elsewhere quite the opposite mistake is made, that of showing to the spectator scenes which should merely be described. I am thinking especially of the episode in which Stavrogin leads by the nose across a room an elderly and respectable gentleman given to proclaiming that he "will not be led by the nose," and then, coming close to him to apologize, bites his ear. Recounted by the shocked narrator in the novel these episodes become manic, ugly, frightening. Seen on the stage they are merely slapstick.

"Dostoevsky has everything except economy," Camus said in an interview in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* a few days before his play opened. "All that has to be done is to tidy up a bit." In a sense—and I mean no disparagement here—Camus has been brilliantly doing just that all his life. In works like *The Rebel* and *The Myth of Sisyphus* he has logically explored certain areas of speculation first opened by Dostoevsky. In *The Plague* he has perhaps come close, in his own spare way, to duplicating the peculiar socio-political qualities of *The Possessed*, while in *The Stranger* he has reworked some of the essential matter of *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment* into a neat discussion of philosophies which allow indifference towards human life. He has even considered the figure of the Russian Nihilist before, dramatically in *The Just Assassins* and philosophically in *The Rebel*. But in this play Camus has relinquished his freedom to develop his material and to speculate. He has voluntarily made himself a prisoner of the theory and the structure of

Dostoevsky's novel, and so his tidying up becomes a dangerous abuse. *The Possessed* is not a tidy novel. It is not constructed logically. It explores total anarchy and it is constructed on the theory that a novel about chaos and disorder cannot be neat. It is disorganized and inexplicable and deliberately mysterious because it portrays a disorganized and inexplicable and deliberately mysterious series of events. To tidy it up, even to transfer it into another genre, is inevitably to simplify and hence to distort. The intentionally vague is illuminated, the deliberately unstressed is underlined in red. The result is falsehood.

Falsehood, and the loss of a great deal of the novel's richness. A good example of this is Camus' simplified treatment of Stepan. The play makes him a comic figure, but a comic figure of the wrong sort, one out of domestic comedy, henpecked and scolded. He should have further dimensions—a monstrous sentimentality and self-pity, an intellectual softness, a touch of that dark clownishness that we see in old Feodor Karamazov. Another example is the clearly diptychal arrangement by which Shatov, who speaks for Dostoevsky, is neatly debated by Kirilov, the atheist and philosopher of suicide. It is true that in the novel these two are paired, as they say in Congress, but there the reader discovers this for himself as he works his way through the strange theories held by the other members of the anarchist gang. Here the deliberate opposition is too obvious, drawn too sharply to the reader's or spectator's attention.

There are other more intangible aspects of the novel that are missing from the drama. Some curtailment is, of course, inevitable, and Karmazinov, the popular novelist who embodies Dostoevsky's attack on Turgenev, is an obvious omission. But surely the absence of the governor and his wife removes an extremely important element from the work, the portrayal of the social and political breakdown which accompanies the spiritual one. And more important still to the total effect is the sense of the town as a puzzled chorus to all that happens—the town shocked, aghast at the wild goings-on, the rumors, the robbery of the Virgin's shrine, the hints of an uprising, the possibility of sudden arrests, the presence of secret agents, the coarse and vulgar jokes that are played, the town frightened of Fedka the escaped convict (one more result of Stepan's wasted life, for Stepan gambled him away at a game of cards and thus pushed him into a life of crime), the town finally going up in flames on a night of riot and murder. Camus does perhaps as well as the stage permits in rendering the horror of this final night, but it is an impossible task without the background of a disorganized and baffled citizenry, of all sanity in a state of siege. We never realize the effect of the action on all lives, the way in which Stavrogin's enigmatic actions and Pe-

ter's plots spread terror through every level of society (Dostoevsky's brilliant re-creation of the terror that Chichikov, possibly an emissary of the devil, inspires among the simple townsfolk in Gogol's *Dead Souls*).

The larger dimensions of the novel are thus lost in the stage version, perhaps inevitably when the laws of the stage are imposed on Dostoevsky's sprawling immensities and when the clarity and logic of the French mind attempts to marshal the creations of the less orderly Russian one. And while the novel itself is thus made a smaller and a narrower thing in the stage version, more serious still is Camus' narrowing of its ultimate concerns. For him the chief question is always, "Where does man fit in society?" Dostoevsky's chief question is always, "Where does man fit in God's universe?" Both are enormous questions, but the second contains the first. To concentrate on the first is perhaps to become a finer writer than Dostoevsky but inevitably a smaller one, and one feels that when Dostoevsky's characters begin to speak of divine matters Camus is a little ill at ease.

It is perhaps because of this that the Dostoevskian character who comes through most faithfully in this version is the least idealistic of them, the arch-conspirator, Peter Verkhovensky. If the ruined and empty Stavrogin is Milton's Satan, "th' excess / Of glory obscur'd," Peter is Satan shrunken into the serpent and ready to work among men. "A precise and smiling cruelty, a serpent who dances," was Jacques Marchand's description of the character as played (by Michel Bouquet) at the *Théâtre Antoine*.

On the whole Camus has failed in bringing Dostoevsky's novel to the stage, but it is a failure at a probably impossible task. It remains only to consider this play as Camus' commentary or explication of *The Possessed*, a book, he tells us in his preface, that he "grew up on and took sustenance from . . . For almost twenty years." What insights has he brought to it, what directions does he give to the serious reader of Dostoevsky? It seems clear that he wishes to stress the empirical over the metaphysical, the criminal over the sinner, the political over the religious, the busy over the aimless, the active over the contemplative, Mephistopheles over Faust, Old Scratch over the Prince of Darkness. It is an interesting reading, a vigorous one, at times a provocative and illuminating one, but *in toto* one that few readers of Dostoevsky will be willing to accept.

Perhaps one may also be permitted a few qualms about the translation. Is it possible for an actor to deliver lines such as, "Everyone here likes you since you played that practical joke on the woman distributing religious tracts by sticking obscene photographs in her Bibles?" Is not "I have a fiacre" a bit too literal a rendering of "J'ai là un fiacre?" Is "I don't like getting into disputes, and I never

laugh," the best that can be made of "Je n'aime pas me disputer et je ne ris jamais?"

The sadness and awe which surrounds a tragic and sudden death may perhaps be urged as a reason for not judging this work as harshly as I have done. I have done so because I feel that the cultists are already at work. It would be a serious misunderstanding of Camus' place in literature if this play were considered a sort of testament, if it were elevated to an importance which it can never bear simply because it is his last work.

ROBERT TRACY

POLITICAL SATIRE IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1763-1783

by BRUCE INGHAM GRANGER

Cornell University Press, 1960. \$5.00

Mr. Granger's book is a hopeful novelty. Satire has for so long been held in general disrepute by our wholesome culture that almost any sober concern with the form is welcome. Furthermore, Mr. Granger has given us the only comprehensive study of American Revolutionary satire since Moses Coit Tyler as long ago as 1897 first meaningfully weighed scattered satiric documents in his *Literary History of the American Revolution, 1763-1783*. At last, I thought, as I began to read Mr. Granger's book; at last a work which will demonstrate the inescapably wholesome contribution of satire to the winning of the Revolution and thus win for satire's neglected writers and their despised virtues a reverence as great as that accorded the Founding Fathers and the Constitution. Alas, the status of satire remains no further advanced today than that of the Declaration of Independence.

Mr. Granger efficiently reveals that pro-revolutionary satire "helped shape public opinion" and thus contributed to political and military victory. Upon a framework of economic, political, social, and military history beginning with the English revenue acts of 1764 and 1765, he has traced the satiric response of American patriots and loyalists to the events and phenomena of the revolutionary struggle. In essence, this was the method of Tyler too, for as Tyler put it, the "artistic value" of Revolutionary literature was of less significance than its "humanistic and historic value." Despite Mr.

Granger's initial chapter on "the literary scene," consequently, his book never really treats satirical literature as an aesthetic expression peculiarly different from other forms of political propaganda.

Mr. Granger's method, in short, is insufficiently analytical. Pinpointing the correct historical event or phenomenon which generated or was commented upon by a satiric piece of prose or verse is not the same thing as evaluating the substantive quality of the political satire. In what way did the political satire really reflect the aspirations of the Revolution, or the aspirations of a social or economic class, or other aspirations? It is ironic that a volume devoted to the correlation of political satire with history has neglected profoundly to judge the satire's political thought or to consider the historical significance to later American culture of this particular conjunction of an outpouring of satire with a revolutionary political upheaval.

Mr. Granger's neglect of the political depth of his satiric materials or of their lasting cultural effect stems from his apparent unwillingness to formulate a view of satire different from that held by most late eighteenth-century satirists. These men depreciated satire as a bastard literary form in which emotion rather than reason naturally predominated. They turned to satire with regret — finding it appropriate only for those times which try men's souls, those times when passion, violence, destruction, falsehood, and combat are in the saddle — and abandoned satire as soon as they believed that further emotional and socio-political conflict was unnecessary.

Almost as if he were one of the writers he has been studying, Mr. Granger concludes his book by noting that "Political satirists in every age seek to touch men's hearts rather than to fill their heads, hoping thereby to sway and even to change their beliefs." This is an unsatisfactory and limiting view, not only of satire but of literature in general. Literary criticism of the past two decades has convincingly shown that the formerly dramatic dichotomy of reason and emotion, the head and the heart, is useless as a critical touchstone. Most of us now are aware that reason and emotion fuse together in a poem or prose piece and give it "meaning" enough. I am not at all certain, I must confess, that Mr. Granger agrees fully with his own final statement on satire; after all, he had assured us earlier on the second page of his work that the satiric effect being one of indirection, even the most blatant satire — "invective" — "depends heavily on metaphor, simile, and other tropes to achieve indirection." According to Mr. Granger's early pages, the most indirect form of

satiric technique is "irony." I cannot easily understand why "indirection" and "irony" lend themselves more readily to the inflammation of a reader's heart than to the illumination of his mind: I wonder whether there is not some basic confusion here between expository literature and "imaginative" literature.

Mr. Granger's great concern with the specific event and the particular satire, with the attainment of great historical depth in the small compass of a twenty-year time-span, produces interesting correlations. But it may have prevented him from discovering the extent to which he was the victim of his subject's zeitgeist. Whatever the cause, Mr. Granger has missed an opportunity to increase our understanding of the sad fate of satire in post-Revolutionary America. Perhaps the best way to describe that fate is to do so indirectly, to consider Moses Coit Tyler's opinions of satire in 1897, a little more than one hundred years after the so-called "Golden Age" of American satire.

"Satire is, of course," Tyler wrote, "one of the less noble forms of literary expression; and in satire uttering itself through burlesque, there is special danger of the presence of qualities which are positively ignoble." Using Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* and Pope's *Dunciad* as illustrations, Tyler went on to note that "Often has satire been but the ally of partisan selfishness and malice, or of the meanness of personal spite." Despite the ever-present danger of ignobility, however, a noble purpose might justify the satirist's efforts. Tyler could find some merit in an American poet's revolutionary satire (John Trumbull's *M'Fingal*) because it was "directed against persons believed by its author to be the foes — the fashionable and the powerful foes — of human liberty . . ." Although fundamentally "a type of literature never truly lovely or truly beautiful — a type of literature hard, bitter, vengeful, often undignified," satire was thus proper for the Revolutionary period because it responded to the particular "conditions" of the time. These were conditions, he was pleased to observe, which "exist no longer."

The conditions to which Tyler had actually referred were those "literary conditions" encouraging a predilection for satire in late eighteenth-century America: the great success achieved in England by the political and social satire of Dryden, Pope, and Churchill. The form, so Tyler went on to explain to readers no longer aware of satire, had lost its vogue not long after Gifford and Byron brought it to its peak. It is not difficult to see that Tyler's grudging

acceptance of Trumbull's satire was based on more than its proper place within a vital literary tradition: the propriety of Trumbull's satire depended upon the right socio-political conditions as much as upon the right "literary conditions."

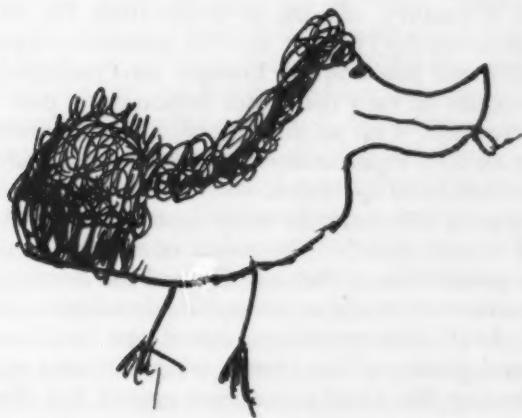
The immense blindness of Tyler and nineteenth-century American culture to their contemporary satire now becomes dramatically apparent. Both ignored or failed to notice the great amount of aesthetically valuable and piercingly satiric literature produced by such figures as Fessenden, Neal, Irving, Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, Emerson, De Forest, George W. Harris, Mark Twain, Holmes, James, Henry Adams, and a host of others. The complacent judgment that satire was a product of "conditions" which had died out soon after the Revolutionary era made it difficult, for example, to acknowledge the venturesome satire of James' *The Bostonians*. Only when James eased his satiric bow and emphasized the "comic" was he noticed again. Persistent grippers like Melville moved outside the pale if they could not abandon their unreasonable satiric impulses.

The optimistic belief that nineteenth-century America did not provide either the right socio-political or the right literary conditions for the satiric spirit was unwarranted. Writing in the 1890's as he did, Tyler might have paid more attention to the increasing social and economic tensions of his age; he might at least have shown that he had reflected deeply about the economic recession of the early 1890's and the violent labor strife of the 1880's. Furthermore, the writers who produced satire all through the nineteenth-century obviously felt, unlike Tyler, that their literary tradition rendered satire rather more noble than ignoble. At the very least, they recognized, with intuition if not with actual knowledge, that the satiric tradition had been firmly rooted in American culture from its very founding in the early seventeenth century and that the Revolutionary satirists were responding to an American as well as a European tradition. There is no space here to fully delineate the firmly rooted place of satire in American culture prior to the Revolution, but it suffices to note that any literature which contained such satirical writings as those of Benjamin Tompson, Edward Taylor, Roger Williams, John Wise, William Byrd, Nathaniel Ward, Thomas Morton, Cotton Mather, Ebenezer Cook, Alexander Hamilton (of Annapolis), Benjamin Franklin, and many others could not help being profoundly aware of the practice and value of political and social satire.

If there is any justification for nineteenth-century America's cavalier dismissal of satire in addition to its mistaken views of the nature of satire and the state of American society, it is the notion that basic political unity had succeeded the savage internecine strife between Hamiltonian Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans. The symbolic harmony which Jefferson and John Adams managed to hammer out in their post-political years was assumed to be genuine. Such harmonious unity was too precious to be disturbed or questioned deeply. Satire was reserved for election years when its excesses might be tolerated; between elections it could only hamper progress and give a false picture of American conditions.

If I have seemed to wander away from Mr. Granger's book it is only because the general issues it raises directly and indirectly cannot be passed over lightly. As I said above, any work dealing with satire is to be welcomed. Mr. Granger's book merits serious attention in its own right, however, because his knowledge of history is admirable and his critical judgment on specific works and writers acute. As an instance of the latter I cite his spirited defense of Franklin as "a literary artist of the first order" in the realm of satire against the careless contrary judgment of the distinguished historian and Franklin editor, Verner W. Crane. Furthermore, Mr. Granger has steeped himself in American literature of the Revolutionary Period and not only placed such an unusually interesting and skilled poet as the loyalist Jacob Bailey in the company of other Revolutionary writers but also brought him into the larger arena of general American literature.

BROM WEBER



AMONG THE DANGS

by GEORGE P. ELLIOTT
Holt, Rinehart, & Winston

Not to recognize greatness forthrightly may be chief among those omissions that emasculate the spirit and surrender literature to the panders of the book industry. So I had better say to begin with that three, at least, of the stories in this book are about as fine as any ever written by an American. "The NRACP", "Children of Ruth", and "Among the Dangs", if we had no more, could make one sure of the magnitude of the talent that produced them.

"The NRACP" is a protest story in the same sense that *Crime and Punishment* is a detective novel. The given situation, gradually but swiftly enough revealed (and swiftly perforce because there are more stations to descend through on the way to the bottom of the pit than anyone else could have suggested in so brief a fiction), is that an "Authority" has been established to solve the Negro problem by canning and exporting the American Negroes. The form of the story is epistolary. The strategy is to let the practises of the Authority be discovered by a fictional employee almost subtle enough to understand that what he has to report (finally in invisible ink) may be a fable of the obscured revolution in America during the Forties.

If Negroes did not exist, we would have to invent them in order to understand our political ambiguities, and one *may* read this story as an invention by the central character to objectify the moral quandary that has trapped him in *mezzo del cammin*.

It could be read also as prophecy in the common sense of that word—a literal prevision of what history has in store for a nation which takes a century, almost, to creep from the Emancipation Proclamation to the Ag Hill riot. But the wonder of the story is that common sense and intuition are brought into coincidence like the trembling needles of two compasses indicating a pole of disaster. Common sense says, *This might happen*, while intuition echoes, *It has*. And we see how expectations of evil have comfortably sheltered us from expectations of the worst.

(I am not quite sure how the story depends on the almost neural shock of its subject matter. The dance of the speculative intellect through the possibilities of the situation and the overlapping resolutions of the structure would seem formidable achievements "in their own right." And I have speculated that if one could somehow extract the moral gravity of the events, what remained would be aesthetically pleasing, like a ballet or a snow crystal. But then, the story

seems to insist, there is no way to apprehend aesthetic qualities except through the proscenium of the moral.)

"After this, nothing," says the correspondent of the story. The author has left only so much obscurity as a kind and cunning man would reserve to let the reader ignore, if he wishes to, what "this" is.

The preoccupation with man at the blind end of a moral labyrinth gives form, as well, to the other two stories I mentioned to begin with. In "Among the Dangs" the labyrinth is sealed as hermetically tight, the enigma of time is demonstrated to be as impenetrable, as in "The NRACP." But in "Children of Ruth"—which in purely emotional ways I like better—the passion of the title character pleads against the stone that seals a squandered mortality. Through the woman a voice, at least, is imagined to articulate that agony for which howling is neither a tolerable nor a sufficient response. In the fell clutch of liberty—where Ruth suffers as much knowledge as her cerebral, chess-playing child—she cries ultimately, "What should I have done?"

The signal in the noise of that question would seem to be the personal pronoun, and the sense of her interrogative declaration is the assumption of personal responsibility for the brute chaos of her condition. (It should be remarked that her condition is not, as the world goes, unenviable, though as the soul goes it is intolerable.) After this . . . something?

Probably not. Most of the victories that grace this fiction are achieved by a pure and futureless transcendence, as in "Hymn of the Angels" where the singing "of the last word, *fidelibus* . . . seemed . . . to be perfectly voluptuous, an essence of voluptuousness, only safe." Only song escapes beyond the trespass in the world.

And yet Ruth is not unique among the characters who, by despairing of transcendence, refuse despair. The females, "passive as in dreams"—like the deaf and mute girl in "Miss Cudahy of Stowes Landing"—again and again seem to offer redemption into male hands too clumsy, hasty, or clever to receive it. Even the vixenish second wife of "The NRACP", content to feed her unborn child the abominable sustenance of cannibal gorging is, by virtue of her ignorance and her ignorance alone, perhaps a vessel of salvation.

Such ambiguity, where the literal monster and the symbolic virgin mother are rind and meat of the same apple, is the peculiar achievement of Mr. Elliott's fictional methods. Without the invention of these methods the Christian Existentialism of the ideas would lack force—and in the same measure lack truth. All the same, the distinguishing devices of the stories are not superficially remarkable. Of art, and a highly self-conscious art there is plenty, but now and then one feels a kind of Tolstoyan impatience with art . . . and may con-

clude that the impatient rejection of art's tiresome baggage is, as with Tolstoy, a very artful thing to do.

For with some of the discarded baggage go some no longer useful ideas of what "character" may be. The ingredient of the fabulous is proportionately increased in a number of Elliott's characters and his psychological perception is focused on the not particularly personal psyche. Thus, while Phoebe (in MCSL) may show enough personality to touch those who believe with Clifton Fadiman that "a human being" can be created from "ink, paper, and the imagination," here the image given the Christian name (not a human being, really not, never in fiction) does not correspond well with our idea of a person. Phoebe is less and is more. She is a fragment of the psyche which, if won by that other fragment, who carries a camera and answers to the name of Bingham, might save him from doing either. She is one of those creatures of the night quite scientifically described by Auden's "In Memory of Sigmund Freud", one of the "exiles who long for the future." If her nature presents insuperable difficulties of interpretation for Freudians, it should be easier for readers of Auden. (Or of Hawthorne for that matter. While there are inventions in each of the best of these stories, as required by the substance, there are fewer novelties, happily, than we are used to in offbeat work.)

This is not the place to go further with analysis of method or ideas either. Anyway, it would be premature to plunge all the way until a better collection of his stories is made; for this present book is only an Elliott sampler, and in such a case a sampler is a disappointment mixed with gratification.

A number of reviews I have seen commented on the diversity of stories in the book, and while some appeared to count this a virtue, I have an idea it is one kind of quality here and quite another in the whole body of stories Mr. Elliott has written during the last fifteen years. What a barren idea it is that because a writer's stories may have appeared here and there in magazines there is no pattern, modulation, and progress (in more than skill) that a book of them might show.

Though I have promised myself each quiet evening to review this book "straight", I can not end without an abbreviated curse on a publishing industry that, so belatedly, can yield such a skimpy haul from a major lode. I feel like a Congolese patriot when his country has been given independence while being robbed of its gold reserves and mines, like one of those dervishes in the Casbah when DeGaulle, a while back, proposed to let the Algerian brothers be free out on the sand while the *colons* kept the ports and the oil wells.

We've got a high standard of living, have we? Nonsense. Not

when we can buy only this much of a book six or seven years after it was due. These were years, too, when from the shops of publishers protesting that they "always lost money on short story collections" came a steady parade of short story collections by inconsequential writers who might as well be categorized under the collective name of Shirley Anne Grau. Those—not few—books of short stories probably sold as well as the bulk of novels issued in the same period. And no doubt encouraged a generation of young writers to emulate what need not have been set in print in the first place.

So this book, copyrighted 1961, reminds me how much is wrong with the way books are made and made available in my country; that therefore (and there are other reasons, I know, none of them really extenuating this) much is factitious about the *best* of our intellectual life, something is less than serious about our most solemn deliberations.

But, well, as one dervish said to another not so long ago in the Casbah, "The dam is beginning to leak." In this book enough may have come through to show the would-be serious reader what has been withheld from him.

R. V. CASSILL

HOW TO COOK A WOLF REVISITED

(A few books about Rome)

When we have once known Rome, and left her where she lies, like a long-decaying corpse, retaining a trace of the noble shape it was, but with accumulated dust and a fungous growth overspreading all its more admirable features—left her in utter weariness, no doubt, of her narrow, crooked, intricate streets, so uncomfortably paved with little squares of lava that to tread over them is a penitential pilgrimage, so indescribably ugly, moreover, so cold, so alley-like, into which the sun never falls, and where a chill wind forces its deadly breath into our lungs—left her, tired of the sight of those immense seven-storied, yellow-washed hovels, or call them palaces, where all that is dreary in domestic life seems magnified and multiplied, and weary of climbing those staircases, which ascend from a ground floor of cookshops, cobblers' stalls, stables, and regiments of cavalry, to a middle region of princes, cardinals, and ambassadors, and an upper tier of artists, just beneath the unattainable sky—left her, worn out with shivering at the cheerless and smoky fireside by day, and feasting with our own substance the ravenous little populace of a Roman bed at night—left her, sick at heart of Italian trickery, which has uprooted whatever faith in man's integrity had endured till now, and sick at stomach of sour bread, sour wine, rancid butter, and bad cookery, needlessly bestowed on evil meats—left her, disgusted with the pretense of holiness and the reality of nastiness, each equally omnipresent—left her, half lifeless from the languid atmosphere, the

vital principle of which has been used up long ago, or corrupted by myriads of slaughters—left her, crushed down in spirit with the desolation of her ruin, and the hopelessness of her future—left her, in short, hating her with all our might, and adding our individual curse to the infinite anathema which her old crimes have unmistakably brought down—when we have left Rome in such mood as this, we are astonished by the discovery, by and by, that our heartstrings have mysteriously attached themselves to the Eternal City, and are drawing us thitherward again, as if it were more familiar, more intimately our home, than even the spot where we were born.

Thus spoke Hawthorne, expressing in the superior rhetoric of his time a rather universal reaction. Every age has, however, its own use for Rome. So in each period has almost every visitor—though now and then along comes one with no use for it at all. At the turn of the century Whistler, who much earlier had done Venice full justice, pronounced Rome “a bit of an old ruin alongside a railway station.” Yet ever since *The Marble Faun* appeared a hundred years back Rome has seemed especially attractive to Americans. *The Dream of Arcadia* did not end in 1915, despite Van Wyck Brooks, it simply took a shape more up to date. Sculptors like Robert Cook and Dimitri Hadzi are today as Roman as once upon a time was Story. James has been succeeded by resident writers such as Donald Downes and Eugene Walter. Three decades after Sessions returned home from Rome our composers are arriving continuously, and coming back again as Bill Smith has done or staying on as Johnny Eaton is doing. Symptomatic if not symbolic was the postwar removal from Paris to Rome of Princess Caetani with the consequent exchange of *Commerce* for *Botteghe Oscure*. No less so last year was that of Alice B. Toklas. As for the painters, there are scores like Beverly Pepper who several generations later find the place more fascinating than Mary Cassatt found it in the days before Edith Wharton.

A new book about Rome is never a novelty, but among the latest is one which comes close. Published by Doubleday in 1960, *See Rome and Eat* is accurately described on the dustjacket as “a gastronomic, historic, and photographic guide to Rome, with selected recipes.” Obviously a labor of love, as are most Italian cookbooks as well as most Roman guidebooks, it was largely the work of Beverly Pepper—who not only scouted out the fifty choice restaurants that serve to introduce reader to city and surprised the secret of more than two hundred select recipes by which he can later recapture his rapture, but also supplied upwards of seventy-five sketches to enliven the generous margins. She was supported by two collaborators: John Hobart, principal columnist for the *Rome Daily American*; and her husband Bill Pepper, chief of *Newsweek's* bureau here, who contributed the section on wine plus thirty original photographs. As

a cookbook it may not prove so rewarding as either *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (1954) or her *Aromas and Flavors of Past and Present* (1958), nor perhaps so useful as *With Gusto and Relish* (1957) by Lord Westbury and Donald Downes. It will never replace that local classic, *Il Talismano della felicità*, by Ada Boni. On the other hand, it is scarcely so special as *The Roman Cookery Book*, a critical translation of *The Art of Cooking* by Apicius published the same year (1958) by the late Barbara Flower and Elisabeth Rosenbaum. As a guidebook too its limitations were defined from the outset. Moreover, as an illustrated introduction it lacks both the unity of a volume like *Women of Rome* (1960) with photos by Sam Waagenaar and text by Moravia, and the quality of *Rome* (1952) with photos by Hélène Hoppenot and text by Stendhal. It represents, nonetheless, a unique and happy combination.

Painters are particularly prone to submit to Rome's seductions and so lose their heads. I recall Philip Pearlstein sitting out a year in contemplation of the Palatine. This volume by Beverly Pepper is apt to seem salted with excessive enthusiasm. Its chief fault, the style itself, is the most manifest distinction of a new book by Elizabeth Bowen. Also published in 1960, though by Knopf, it is summarized thus in the blurb: "Not a novel, not a travel book, not history, *A Time in Rome* is a story of an encounter that becomes, in its poetic way, a love story." This warning is amply warranted. Well served by her training, the novelist avoids the painter's extravagant prose. Conversely, whereas Pepper is over-impressed, Bowen is under-exposed. For creative writers too Rome conceals many traps. Novels of the distant past are safest. Graves had much better luck than Williams. The most dangerous tale of all is the true one of an encounter that becomes, in its poetic way, a love story. If the encounter is brief, the peril is thereby enhanced. Percy Lubbock did not achieve his masterpiece in *Roman Pictures* (1923), but he contrived to sidestep the pitfalls which beset our lovely Irish lady. His saturation in his subject was casual and complete, whereupon his work was objectified through fictional distancing. He had, in other words, both a theme and a technique. Unlike *The House in Paris*, *A Time in Rome* reveals neither.

Its superficiality is apparent if we compare it with a work of the same sort by another novelist, Eleanor Clark's *Rome and a Villa* (1952), which profits even more from the author's profound immersion in her material than from the appropriate decorations of Eugene Berman. Furthermore, *A Time in Rome* seems spatulate in contrast to *An Italian Visit* (1953) by C. Day Lewis, whose aperçus crystallize in quick, vivid images like this:

Another thing you would like about the Romans
Is the way they use their city, not as a warren
Of bolt-holes, nor a machine into which one is fed
Each morning and at evening duly disgorged
But as an open-air stage. . . .

Elizabeth Bowen is at her best, and worst, as she launches her sentimental valediction:

There, in the Villa Borghese, I faced it that I might in a sense be looking my last on the snarl of David, twisted by the instant before the letting go of the sling, or that other Bernini, Daphne writhing within the clutch at once of Apollo and her metamorphosis—while you watch, bark rushes up her thighs and her twig-fingers separate into leaves. . . .

One ultimately wonders why she wrote the book, why she bothered yet bothered not enough.

This objection cannot be raised, understandably, against two new blooms from two old Roman transplants—Mary Chamberlin's fictional *Dear Friends and Darling Romans* (Lippincott, 1959) and Aubrey Menen's non-fictional *Rome for Ourselves* (McGraw-Hill, 1960). The latter is perhaps the most appealing and the most controversial volume ever to worry this subject. Few would dispute the superiority of the illustrations—151 of them, all full-page and many full-color, nearly half of which are the work of Georgina Masson, already distinguished for her photographic report on *Italian Villas and Palaces*. Menen's essays, whose nature is better suggested by the British title of *Rome Revealed*, constitute the real issue. To me his text, at once iconoclastic and sympathetic, accomplishes for Rome what Mary McCarthy did so well in *The Stones of Florence and Venice Observed*. He beguilingly debunks what demands it, shatters myths large and small, scatters wit abroad and drives points home with ingratiating ease. And in the end (that portion previously printed in *Holiday*) why he lives here and loves it is clear. The trick merely expands our Hawthorne paragraph.

Both a Roman like Beverly Pepper and a novelist like Elizabeth Bowen, Menen thus combines experience with presentation or substance with style. He is, besides, the very type of the modern. His response to the baroque is as strong as the earlier reaction against it—and if you dislike baroque you hate Rome. In 1846, praising Canova's "exquisite grace and beauty," Dickens condemned Bernini's as "the most detestable class of productions in the wide world." Menen appreciates Bernini at least as much as Miss Bowen and expresses his enjoyment rather better than Mrs. Pepper. Our day is not likely to produce a Henry James. To quote Day Lewis again:

Well, you've only to think of James, as one must do here,
Lapping the cream of antiquity, purring over
Each vista that stroked his senses, and in brief
Rubbing himself against Rome like a great tabby,
To see what I mean. . . .

JOHN LUCAS

The Poetry of Weldon Kees: An Appreciation

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF WELDON KEES

Edited by DONALD JUSTICE

A limited edition of two hundred copies. The Stone Wall Press,
Iowa City, Iowa, 1960.

Printed by hand from Romanée and Lutetia types, one hundred and eighty copies of the published edition are on Rives Light, a French mould-made paper, and are quarter bound in Oasis leather with Japanese paper sides, \$18.00; twenty copies are on Rives Heavy and are full bound in Oasis leather, \$26.00.

It was a good thought on Mr. Justice's part to collect as fully as possible and make available again, even in so limited and expensive a form, the poems of Weldon Kees. I share his hope that a larger edition may soon follow. For surely the great beauty of the work must arouse wide interest among readers of poetry, if there are some still around.

That last clause of reservation comes up as part of some rueful-ironic reflexions about this handsome publication; I can imagine the poet, if by chance he still lives, looking wryly at the leather binding, the rich paper, the Romanée and Lutetia types, and perhaps writing a characteristically sardonic poem about it; then I reflect sadly that he might not be able to afford a copy.

But probably Weldon Kees is not alive. The circumstances of his disappearance in 1955 suggested suicide, and though one keeps an uncertain hope it is more likely that this fine book is a monument and a memorial. As a friend of the poet, I am filled with regret for the despair which must have possessed him, and do not regard this review as a proper occasion for those elegant literary comparisons with Rimbaud and Hart Crane, which I doubt would have delighted him. He was a man not greatly patient of clichés.

A few words, then, about the specific excellences of the poems, and the characteristic voice of the poet.

He is in a special sense a poet of the city, and though he lived the last several years of his life in California the city of his poems is always New York, a grim and somber yet loving abstraction of that metropolis of the mind, with place names like invocations: Tenth Street, Avenue A, Chelsea, Astor Place, Brooklyn Heights . . . and summers on Fire Island or the Cape. The rest of the world is most often a matter of indifference:

We are in Cleveland, or Sioux Falls. The architecture
Seems like Omaha, the air pumped in from Düsseldorf.
(Dead March)

What is special about his work is the degree to which the city invades the poems, becomes the poems, the way in which he feels himself into the textures of the city, slowly perceiving the fragments of a huge fact which is also a fate; the poems are the process of this perception, which he sums up in the title of one of them: "The City As Hero." It is a scene which dominates the actors in it, and invents their actions: the sidewalks, buildings, roofs, chimneys, lights and shadows and resonance of stone, "the rouged and marketable glow/ Beyond Third Avenue;" "Far down on Lexington, / A siren moans and dies." Above all, the lonely apartment room of despair and disrepair, where "the crack is moving down the wall," "the fissures in the studio grow large," "a drunk is sobbing in the hall," where the mirrors reflect nothing and the phone rings only when Robinson is not at home. Robinson is Weldon Kees' lost citizen, his nearest approach to a hero, and a horrifying explanation is suggested for the ringing phone:

It could be Robinson
Calling. It never rings when he is here.

It is with items of this sort — architecture, garbage, furniture — that Weldon Kees works his magic; and it is of the nature of this magic, too, that for all the grimness of its properties the result is also somewhat gay, a courageous assault on the deep melancholy of self-doubt which guarantees the public and satiric gesture.

There is another way in which Kees' is a distinctively metropolitan consciousness, a way which I should like to characterize as Alexandrian, without any feeling that Alexandrian is a disgraceful thing for a human mind to be. He is not afraid of erudition, and doesn't have delicate lyrical qualms about culture. It is in fact central to the understanding of his poems that the city is above all a place of compo-

sitions, of *collages*, inheriting the beautiful junk of the ages from all over the world, making one thing relevant to another for the simple but adequate reason that the two things happen to be in the same place, the two thoughts happen to come into the same head together. So a fair number of his best pieces have to do with the idea or form of a catalogue, they list and vary items which have at first a merely arbitrary look, then grow into strange relations:

Santayana, who had stomach trouble
As a youth, once shook the hand
Of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Professor Norton
Lingered on. "No comfort, not a breath of love,"
Wrote Nietzsche, going mad. Booth Tarkington loved art.

This technique, this view of what form is, I find always at least engaging and immensely instructive. It looks easy, perhaps, but it isn't. In which it a little resembles Cubism. Often he employs it for an effect of flatness to set off and prepare his revelations; the parody of a scholar fumbling among his sources and finding, suddenly, the horror of himself:

Vide Master,
Muzie, Brown and Parker on the hypoplastic heart.
Culpin stressed the psychogenic origin. DeCosta
Ruled out syphilis. If we follow Raines and Kolb,
We follow Raines and Kolb. . . .
(The Clinic)

Eclectic? Of course. Technique of prose? Certainly. Yet it will happen that a piece of deliberate pastiche, a putting together of elegant cultural snippets, rises to be sublime poetry. The subject is women, and I quote the last of three stanzas:

Their bowels almost drove Swift mad. "Sad stem,
Sweet evil, stretching out a lion's jaws," wrote Marbode.
Now we cling together in our caves. That not impossible she
That rots and wrinkles in the sun, the shadow
Of all men, man's counterpart, sweet rois
Of vertue and of gentleness . . . The brothel and the crib endure.
Past reason hunted. How we die! Their pain, their blood, are ours.
(A Pastiche for Eve)

So, for this poet, any collocation of data may become available as a form: a diary, a detective story, program notes for a symphony, "Abstracts of Dissertations," "Report of the Meeting." Nor may this be thought of, or dismissed, as a technical trick only, for it finds its exact equivalent in the poet's view of his city and his world — a place where one lonely human mind, witty in its worst despair,

strives to assert necessary connections among a million pieces of random information, seeking its own image in one sliver after another of the world's shattered mirror. It is greatly to the honor of Weldon Kees' memory that he understood and demonstrated so well what kind of thing, in these days, a poem is: a piece of language with which nothing else can be done.

Now it is too late, one reads in these poems the record of a terrible and increasing despair. The hitherto uncollected poems at the end of the volume (though I have no assurance they are all necessarily late ones I am certain that some must be) are full of hopeless distances, flood, fire, ruin, regret for "the marvelous cities that our childhoods built for us"; in one, a ghostly murderer with "moulting beard and ancient stare" pursues the speaker to a fated and fatal encounter; another is a mocking account of burning books to keep warm; a third imprecates a final flood upon "this room" which is "our world". Here is another, "Covering Two Years," which I shall quote in full for a testament of excellence as well as anguish:

This nothingness that feeds upon itself:
Pencils that turn to water in the hand,
Parts of a sentence, hanging in the air,
Thoughts breaking in the mind like glass,
Blank sheets of paper that reflects the world
Whitened the world that I was silenced by.

There were two years of that. Slowly,
Whatever splits, dissevers, cuts, cracks, ravel, or divides
To bring me to that diet of corrosion, burned
And flickered to its terminal. — Now in an older hand
I write my name. Now with a voice grown unfamiliar,
I speak to silences of altered rooms,
Shaken by knowledge of recurrence and return.

But it is too late, I guess, even for that uncertain hope I spoke of before; seven years, one is told, is the statutory limit, beyond which an unidentifiable existence cannot legally be continued; and nearly six of those years are gone: subject for a poem by Weldon Kees. Still, out of some more and more marginal sense that life is better than death, one does hope. My hope founds itself on nothing more solid than one of these poems, "Relating to Robinson," in which the story is foretold:

Somewhere in Chelsea, early summer;
And, walking in the twilight toward the docks,
I thought I made out Robinson ahead of me.

Maybe, I think for a moment: maybe. I remember Browning's "Waring"; comparison no less inconsequent than the one about Rim-

baud and Crane. In Vishnu land what avatar? And I consider walking in Chelsea early in the summer.

But even if one had the generous folly to believe in poems, this poem would give no guarantee, and comfort scant enough:

Under a sign for Natural Bloom Cigars,
While lights clicked softly in the dusk from red to green,
He stopped and gazed into a window
Where a plaster Venus, modeling a truss,
Looked out at eastbound traffic. (But Robinson,
I knew, was out of town: he summers at a place in Maine,
Sometimes on Fire Island, sometimes the Cape,
Leaves town in June and comes back after Labor Day.)
And yet, I almost called out, "Robinson!"
There was no chance . . .

And though the speaker does meet someone, a terrified accuser who says, "You must have followed me from Astor Place," the meeting is inconclusive, and the poem disappears into the blue distances of Weldon's legendary city, New York:

I had no certainty,
There in the dark, that it was Robinson
Or someone else.
The block was bare. The Venus,
Bathed in blue fluorescent light,
Stared toward the river. As I hurried West,
The lights across the bay were coming on.
The boats moved silently and the low whistles blew.

HOWARD NEMEROV



NEW LIGHT ON OLD CRIMES

LARSEN'S SECOND LAW: SOME NEW EVIDENCE ON THE EDITORIAL POLICIES OF THE LUCE ENTERPRISES

By ARTHUR MIZENER

Dear Reed:

Ever since the last issue of the *Miscellany* arrived I have been brooding over Erling Larsen's fine piece on Agee, "Let Us Now Not Praise Ourselves"; and you know what happens when people like us get to brooding — something like this to prove yet again that the masses, as we called them back there in the Thirties, ought never to have been taught how to write.

No doubt kids like you will think my brooding about Erling's piece, like Erling's writing it, merely another illustration of Larsen's Second Law of Socio-dynamics, according to which us aging types have just about reached the point where we are going to get all starry-eyed over the Thirties.¹ Maybe so; but whether we illustrate Larsen's Law or not has nothing to do with how much it hurts. Besides, I am going to claim as boldly as any bibliographer beaten to the punch about a faked titlepage that for some time I have been thinking over the essential point Erling is making about the Thirties, and in a minute now I'll also think up something about grading exam papers to explain why I haven't *said* anything about it. The great thing, as Erling knows, is to recognize that, though the Thirties were genuinely concerned about "surface matters" (and rightly; starvation is no joke), they cared as much as they did about them because they believed them "symptomatic," the surface manifestations of deep trouble.

I think now — and Erling's irony suggests he does too — that the ways we related the symptoms to the deep causes were not always as precise and understandable as they might have been. People seldom are precise about this sort of thing. Think of the way even sympathetic modern readers find the Elizabethan's anxiety about "degree"

Editor's Note: ¹ Erling Larsen's "second law," described on pgs. 86-86 of our Winter Issue, suggested that just as there was a "widespread literary and high-fashion interest" in the Twenties during the Fifties, so there will be a run on the Thirties during the Sixties. The recent reissue of Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is taken as one harbinger.

excessive — neurotic, as they love to say. Perhaps only the beautiful anger of Ben Jonson's comedies, and maybe of *Timon*, will show people how much degree was, for Elizabethans, charged with the kind of humanity needed by their society. But no one reads Ben Jonson, does he — or *Timon* either. It's probably just literary optimism to think that poems can make people in other times understand the way an age's sense of humanity coalesces around certain ideas and gives them a special value.

Anyhow, Erling is the first person I have read who makes it clear that the "surface matters" he and Agee were worrying about in the Thirties did matter deeply. After we laid the flattering unction of economic recovery to our souls, most of us forgot why, but the rank corruption, the inhumanity, has gone right on mining all within just the same. I think one can see clearly the extent to which concern for the kind of inhumanity that is lacking in our society informed the social and economic anxieties of the Thirties by looking at the queer ideological combinations that were typical of the period.

In what Erling and his boyhood Minnesota friend, Nick Carroway, then thought of as "the effete East" we were worrying about much the same things that bothered these boys in Minnesota and James Agee "in the earliest and chary spring" on a "Sunday Afternoon: Outskirts of Knoxville, Tenn." When Agee, the Harvard man, had his first book of poems published by the Yale University Press (pretty "effete East" for a Tennessee boy, at that), MacLeish said in the Foreword of the book, "It is not enough to assert in verse the merits of Marxism. . . . Agee obviously has a deep love of the land. Equally obviously he has a considerable contempt for the dying civilization in which he has spent twenty-four years. By both he comes honestly."

Honestly come by or not, these were the feelings of all of us. Marxism was, we thought, the most effective analysis of the symptoms around — which it was, which is not saying much for it, considering the alternatives offered by the N. A. M. and other social Darwinists (remember old Sumner at Yale?). But the disease underlying these symptoms was our real concern and that was in our society's soul, or whatever you want to call the thing that makes it a civilization and not just a socio-economic machine.

At almost exactly the same time that Agee's book was published, William Empson, feeling just as we did, was observing of Gray's *Elegy* that "many people, without being communists, have been irritated by the complacency in the massive calm of the poem." He is talking about Gray's assertion that all those flowers were "*born to blush unseen*"; we are to remember, that is, that however much we may deplore the fact on human grounds, village Hampdens are bur-

ied unapplauded in their humble churchyard because God or Nature or some other Nanny has arranged things that way. No doubt Gray meant to achieve the perfect balance of feelings that Pope did in his lines about the poor Indian. As a matter of fact we know he did, because he even echoed Pope in "Their sober wishes never learned to stray." (Pope says, "His soul, proud Science never taught to stray.") But he didn't, and Empson is right about the *Elegy's* complacency. Just to get another of your universities, and mine, in here, I remember stealing two very special days from my graduate work at Princeton the year Agee's book was published, one in order to read Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* and the other to read Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* and *Decline and Fall*.

What I am trying to get at here is another kind of evidence for Erling's explanation of what the Thirties were really worrying about. Only if we were reaching for something like what he describes could we possibly find Trotsky and Waugh equally relevant to our needs. It was these needs, too, that made John Strachey's *The Coming Struggle for Power* the eager young man's guide to how to think about practically everything. Strachey was literate and sensitive, which was rare among thorough Marxists. But even more, he was a Marxist for reasons that made him anxious to show that he and T. S. Eliot were on the same side. So — like Trotsky and Waugh — they were, about the things we cared for most, however wrong we may have been to think they cared most for these things. And we were, of course, wrong. Eliot got awfully sore when he was told that *The Waste Land* "expressed the 'disillusionment of a generation'"; and Strachey wrote a little book with the marvelous title *Literature and Dialectical Materialism* in an attempt to bring us all ideologically to heel. None of this, as far as I can remember, bothered us much. We were very used to hearing the dogmatists of both the right and the left shouting angrily at us, "That is not what I meant at all. That is not it, at all."

Well, I still think we were right about what was important in both Strachey and *The Waste Land*; for that matter, I am still in my ideologically unsound way a Trotskyite and Waughite, too. What's more, I think we were right to be angry, really angry as Agee was, about the general attitude in our society that was represented for Agee by *Fortune*. Erling is a little wry about this anger and distrust, for himself if not for Agee, and of course it is hard to avoid embarrassment's irony, remembering all the oversimplifications youthful enthusiasm got us into. But I think those oversimplifications did not lead us so dangerously astray as does the unenthusiastic common sense of our present attitude. Let me see if I can't make a little moral tale that will support this feeling out of a small error in Erling's piece.

At the beginning of his piece, when he is explaining Larsen's Law, he says that interest in the Twenties was so great in the Fifties that even *Life* ran "a large excerpt from the Mizener book [on Scott Fitzgerald]." I wish, alas, that this were true, for then I should not have felt guilty and ashamed these last ten years about what *Life* did run. I don't mean to blame *Life* for what happened; it was primarily my fault, not just for the specific reasons that — you may be *sure* — I'm going to describe in telling my little story, but also for a more general reason. Anyone who writes a biography feels a certain culpability, a sense of his own inadequacy, a painful assurance that his imagination is insufficient for understanding all that he is bound to learn about his man. In an important sense my trouble with *Life* began with my writing a book about Fitzgerald at all. But it went far beyond that beginning.

The piece about Fitzgerald that *Life* ran over my name in 1951 was not an excerpt from my book. It was a piece specially written for *Life*, and it started with a telephone call from an Assistant Editor of *Life* who had been a student of mine and a contemporary of yours at Yale. He had been a nice guy, maybe still was; Assistant Editors are well down in the hierarchy at *Life*, just above Research Assistants, and maybe he couldn't have prevented what happened even if he had wanted to. Anyhow, his offer was very tempting; there was the money, there was that sneaking desire we all have to impress (Hey, I saw your picture in *Look*, boy!). I think I would have hated any Luce publication enough in the Thirties to resist those temptations. Maybe not, of course; but being sore at them would sure have helped. In the Fifties, however, I was sensible, as it is called. I said yes, I'd write the piece if our friend would promise me that *Life* would not print anything over my name without my OK. He accepted that, and I carefully rewrote the piece several times in order to include everything they suggested. After the final draft went in there was silence until the piece appeared in the magazine — cut, added to, and rewritten until all the shading had gone from my account of Zelda's collapse and Fitzgerald's bad years. At the same time, incidentally, *Life* borrowed from Fitzgerald's daughter the family photograph albums, agreeing to print no picture she vetoed, and then printed what they chose — including a heart-breaking snapshot of Zelda — without consulting Mrs. Lanahan at all.

Maybe I was unreasonably sensitive — if so, I still am — about their rewriting of my piece because, like any good product of the Thirties, I had from the beginning of our dealings a vestigial suspicion that *Life's* idea of the truth was inhuman and their conception of honesty defective. Anyway, as it turned out, they screwed up my piece and tricked me into being responsible for it. I would have

known in the Thirties that they were going to, but in the Fifties I had forgotten.

I think the moral of this little tale is that we were right in the Thirties about the essential inhumanity of the part of our world that *Fortune* and *Life* belong to. They are bright, they are clever, above all they are rich (never sue Luce, the lawyers tell you). In their damned way they are, I am prepared to believe, well-intentioned. I feel pretty sure, for instance, the *Life* people believed they were tactfully doing the inexperienced professor a good turn by touching up my piece, and convinced themselves that in rewriting it they were not *rewriting* it. We would probably have gone wrong about such things in the Thirties, ascribing their conduct to all sorts of malicious, machiavellian motives. The fact remains that though we might well have been wrong then about their conscious intentions, we would not have been wrong about what they would in fact do, as I at least was in the Fifties.

Agee said,

It seems to me curious, not to say obscene and thoroughly terrifying, that it could occur to an association of human beings drawn together . . . for profit . . . to pry intimately into the lives of an undefended and appallingly damaged group of human beings, in the name of science, of 'honest journalism,' of humanity, for money and for a reputation for crusading and unbiased . . . and that these people could be capable of meditating this prospect without the slightest doubt of their qualification to do an 'honest' piece of work.

There is an unironic committedness here that embarrasses us now. Nevertheless Agee is right. This was the attitude of these "associations of human beings" in the Thirties, and we hated it then. It was still their attitude in the Fifties, unless the varnish of genteel sensationalism they put over my Fitzgerald piece was unrepresentative (and we know it wasn't), but in the Fifties I, at least, did not hate their attitude enough to keep clear of them; on the contrary, I was terribly busy being a hell of a good guy about them. This is still their attitude in the Sixties, and therefore it is still true that the only real defense against them for people as poor and powerless as we are is anger and rejection. They are The Enemy, and you can make deals with The Enemy only if you are as strong as they are, as we are not.

It is a fine thing to have some one like Erling remind us that once, in the Thirties, we were made wise enough by our anger to understand that.

Arthur

KENNETH REXROTH'S MURDERED HEROES

I.

A long time ago, maybe 1948, I managed to earn the enmity of Kenneth Rexroth by an unwise editorial act. He had contributed verse to the magazine *Furioso*, of which I was the publisher, and then, upon encouragement, had sent in for publication a small anthology of the work of young English poets, together with an introduction. We felt committed to printing the material, but we disliked both the anthology and the introduction, and being more editorial than well-mannered thought to indicate our disapproval through an introduction or note of our own. Our comments proved to be smart and unpleasant — though they were mild and cordial compared with the blasts to which Rexroth himself is addicted — and the only defense I can see for them now is that they were written in good faith on the assumption that we had, as editors, a right to express our views so long as we also printed Rexroth's contribution in full (this is one of the earlier manifestations of "equal time"). Indeed our faith was such that we submitted our comments to him in proof, together with the proof of the introduction and anthology, for approval, asking that he make any necessary additions.

He wrote back angrily to Howard Nemerov and to me. Nemerov had had nothing to do with the writing of the editorial comments, so was only involved as a friend to both parties. Upon Rexroth's demand the project was abandoned; the anthology with its commentaries did not appear. Since then I have had plenty of opportunity to absorb the lesson (never cross Rexroth) and try to keep my big mouth shut.

Now, though, the mouth opens again. The occasion is a review by Rexroth in *The New York Times* for January 8, 1961, of three books: Weldon Kees' *Collected Poems*, Howard Nemerov's *New & Selected Poems* and James Michie's *Possible Laughter*. I haven't seen one of the three books Rexroth reviewed, the one by James Michie, so I must content myself with the others. The Kees book is the first one discussed; it is praised for being the real thing, that is, for being the testament of an "alienated poetic hero" who really meant what he said when he described our modern world "with absolute horror;" who was not, in other words, "trying to frighten the denizens of a chic literary week-end in a Stately Home." The proof of the pudding, says Rexroth, is Kees' suicide (at least he disappeared near the Golden Gate Bridge) in 1955.

The Nemerov book is then set up, with the volume by the other victim, Michie, as essentially fraudulent. It is described as an example of a modern phenomenon, "literature as a polite accomplishment of

well-bred bureaucrats," something not meant, something speaking its piece in an "excessively academic" manner, something not existing "in the same universe as the poetry of Weldon Kees." Rexroth concludes:

Curious that both these books [Nemerov's and Michie's] of light verse should be about the same things as Weldon Kees' and even in a sense say the same things. It's a little frightening. In fact, it frightened Weldon Kees.

Now I am not concerned with the merits of the Kees and Nemerov volumes here — though I may as well state that I like them both. My concern is simply with the implication that Nemerov and his kind had something to do with Kees' death. The implication is there all right, and it is there without elaboration or defense. What the "it" refers to has to be supplied, but surely the "it" includes Nemerov and Michie. Furthermore Rexroth's history of similar accusations enforces the statement; he long ago told us who killed Hart Crane, E. A. Robinson, Dylan Thomas and a number of other poets, in his poem, "Thou Shalt Not Kill." That poem and a number of essays present at some length a favorite Rexroth thesis, that our society is a predatory one, "murdering" not only poets but the souls of men in general. The society is represented by anyone who "acquiesces" to it. Thus the murderer in "Thou Shalt Not Kill" is a generalized "you in the Brooks Brothers suit" who is sometimes a businessman, sometimes an editor, sometimes a writer, sometimes a scientist, to whom Rexroth says (turning lethal himself):

I want to pour gasoline down your chimneys.
I want to blow up your galleries.
I want to burn down your editorial offices.
I want to slit the bellies of your frigid women.
I want to sink your sailboats and launches.
I want to strangle your children at their finger paintings.
I want to poison your Afghans and poodles.

Particularly annoying to Rexroth are those who manage to *pass* as friends of those who have not acquiesced. D. H. Lawrence, for example, was killed by some of those; in an introduction to an edition of Lawrence's poems Rexroth says that false comrades, men Lawrence naively thought were comrades, were the death of him; they were the evil in the world that Lawrence had to learn about ("the learning killed him, slowly and terribly"). Also annoying to Rex-

roth are the poets who have gone over to the universities (their form of acquiescence):

The majority of American poets have acquiesced in the judgment of the predatory society. They do not exist as far as it is concerned. They make their living in a land of make-believe, as servants of a hoax for children. They are employees of the fog factories—the universities. They help make the fog. Behind their screen the universities fulfill their social purposes. They turn out bureaucrats, perpetuate the juridical lie, embroider the costumes of the delusion of participation, and of late, in departments never penetrated by the humanities staff, turn out atom, hydrogen and cobalt bombers—genocidists is the word.

—from an essay on Kenneth Patchen, in *Obvious Essays*

I mention this all as background to the Rexroth review of Kees and Nemerov, since Nemerov was a friend of Kees and is an employee of one of the fog factories. It seems likely therefore that he can be held accountable on *both* the above counts: 1) as false comrade to Kees, and 2) as a genocidist because he works at an institution like unto those that make the bombs (Bennington!).

I could editorialize at this point, but let me instead describe what I know of the “false” comradeship of Nemerov to Kees. I know it only at second-hand, through the magazine *Furioso*. When *Furioso* was about to stop publication in 1953, we began to send back all the manuscripts we received with a mimeographed notice of our end. Among those who received the notice was Kees. He wrote back as follows:

Dear Reed:

Today I had a manuscript back from *Furioso*, and attached to it was a somewhat ambiguous mimeographed note, along with a message: “Sorry. This is it.” The initials looked like H. W., but may have been R. W.—My first thought was a blank, my second that *Furioso* is folding. I hope that this is not the case; I hope so very much indeed. For the magazine is the only literary organ that I have been able to read with pleasure and admiration during the last few years; and it is also the only one where one’s own work appears in non-shameful company. I also ought to mention my gratitude for the hospitality the magazine has shown to my poems right along, and to poetry.

Say it isn't so. Tell me what's going on. Is there anything I can do? Please write.

Faithfully, Weldon

This was dated January 20, 1953. *Furioso* had printed 14 poems by Kees, in seven different issues; it had also made one of Kees' books, *The Fall of the Magicians*, a selection of its tiny Poetry Book Club. What I wish to point out is first, that Nemerov, aside from being an editor, was one of *Furioso's* most substantial contributors (he in fact wrote nearly the whole of one of our issues) and some of the poems printed in *Furioso* are in the volume Rexroth reviewed; second, that *Furioso* was an academic magazine—it was always either edited at one of the fog factories or by editors who (with one exception) were teaching or about to teach. Kees knew us; and though it is perhaps true that our magazine was not as fogbound as many other magazines, it is also true that most of its readers were in the fog factories, and its primary allegiances were to the fog factories. Kees knew this too, and he knew the large role Nemerov played on the magazine; yet he said, "it is the only literary organ that I have been able to read with pleasure and admiration during the last few years." As Kees disappeared two years later there was no further occasion for *Furioso* (which was dead) or Nemerov (who did not, I think, see Kees again) to *become* false in their comradeship with Kees. It would seem therefore either that the Kees letter above was itself a false statement, or that Rexroth knew, and knows, more about the falsehoods being committed around Kees than Kees himself did.

I suspect the latter: Rexroth knows more about Kees and Lawrence and Thomas and Robinson and all the others than any of them knew about themselves. Indeed it seems to me that Rexroth is himself a kind of institution (should I say fog factory?) to which all his heroes have "acquiesced." It is true that they have acquiesced in death only, but acquiesced they have; now they are firmly a part of him. All you have to do is read about them in his works.

II.

And now, I suppose, I can cast myself as a murderer (before the fact) of Rexroth (perhaps he will anticipate the fact and reciprocate, by pouring gasoline down my chimney). After all I was a false friend in 1948, and now I am simply an enemy. Strangely, though, I don't feel much like playing the part. I think that all in all I would rather acquiesce to the Rexroth institution than to many of the others he has spoken against. But why does he *make* himself an institution? why this authoritarianism? He himself says,

A man can be forgiven for being a snarf, a vegetarian, or a frequenter of astrologists. He cannot be forgiven for being a parson or a social worker or a professor.

—from the Introduction to *Obvious Essays*

But who is the professor, parson, social worker in the lives of all the Rexroth heroes from Lawrence to Kees? Rexroth. If I were one of Rexroth's heroes—and nothing right now seems more unlikely—I think I could be a great friend of Rexroth *up to the point* when he tells me who is murdering me, who is killing me “with a telegram to the Pope,” “with a padded brassiere,” “with a teaball.” But then the romance would be over; I would have to insist that I had the option of putting my own gin to my mouth, my own knife to my breast, as I think Crane had, and Thomas, and probably Kees. Indeed one of the remarkable qualities of these men was that they seem to have retained this option to the end in a world which, as Rexroth points out, is mostly acquiescence. They retained it, they insisted on it—yet Rexroth has now come along to take it away from them.

Who is persecuting whom? I don't know. I do know that it is all a very sad business and that I haven't written it up very well. I wish that I could have displayed here the virtues ascribed by Rexroth to the greatest Chinese fiction:

What are these virtues? First, an absolute mastery of pure narrative. Second, humanity. Third, as the synthesis of virtues one and two, a whole group of qualities that should have some one name—reticence, artistic humility, maturity, objectivity, total sympathy, the ability to reveal the macrocosm in the microcosm, the moral universe in the physical act, the depths of psychological insight in the trivia of happenstance, without ever saying anything about it, or them—the ‘big’ things, that is. This is a quality of style. It is the fundamental quality of the greatest style. It does have a name, although it is not a term we usually think of as part of the jargon of literary criticism. The word is magnanimity.

—from an essay on the Chinese Classic Novel, in *Obvious Essays*

But Rexroth hasn't displayed these qualities, or this quality, either.

RW

NOTE: After the piece above had been set up in type, an exchange of letters between Nemerov and Rexroth appeared in *The Times Book Review* (Feb. 19). Nemerov found Rexroth's “insinuation”—that Nemerov's work was “the sort of thing that made society intolerable to Weldon Kees”—“contemptible.” Rexroth

replied that he was "very sorry indeed to have given Howard Nemerov the impression" that such an insinuation had been made. He concluded: "My only point was that verse like his and James Michie's, obviously lighter in tone than Kees' mordant and often gruesome poetry, makes much the same indictment of the moral world of the mid-twentieth century. My intention was complimentary to Mr. Nemerov and Mr. Michie, not the reverse."

This apology perhaps displays the magnanimity I have been searching for. If so I must in turn apologize. Unfortunately, since reading the apology, I have tried without success to construe the review as a compliment, or in fact as anything other than what I have already described. RW.

Continued from page two

HOWARD NEMEROV and JOHN PAUKER, former editors of *Furioso*, have appeared frequently in *The Miscellany*. Mr. Nemerov's most recent volume of poems was reviewed in our Winter Issue.

WAYNE BOOTH, our Department of American Editor, is sometimes accused of being a myth. He is not. He is chairman of the English Department at Earlham College, and is at the moment on leave in Rome.

PHILIP BOOTH teaches at Wellesley. He is a skier and a Walden man, and the author of *Letter from a Distant Land* (Viking, 1956).

JOHN TAYLOR teaches English at the University of New Hampshire. He graduated from the University of Missouri, received his Ph.D. at the University of Iowa.

RICHARD C. RAYMOND is "employed in the field of student ex-

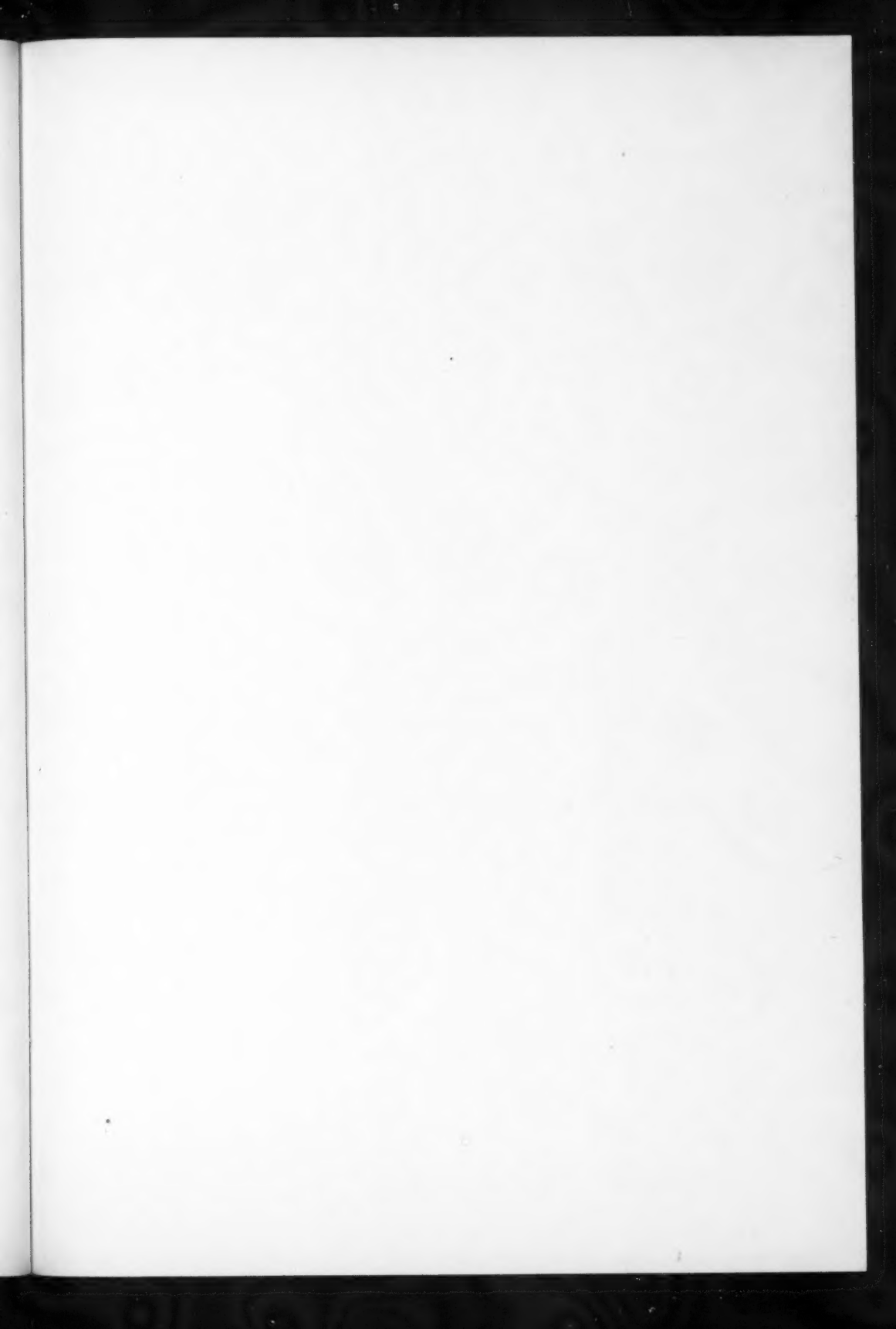
change at the Institute of International Education in NYC." He has been published in *The Colorado Quarterly* and other magazines, and in 1958 won the Dylan Thomas award at the New School.

BROM WEBER, author of many studies in American Literature teaches at the University of Minnesota.

ROBERT TRACY, a regular contributor to *The Miscellany*, has just finished reviewing *Winnie Ille Pooh* for us, but we were unable to fit the review in this issue.

ROBERT GRANT BURNS writes: "At the present I am only ready to say that I was born in Jackson-ville, East Texas, in 1938. (And that 'East' is pretty important!)."

KENNETH PITCHFORD served in the infantry during the Korean War, and studied at Magdalen College, Oxford, shortly thereafter. He presently teaches at N.Y.U. He published his first volume of verse in number 5 of Scribners' *Poets of Today* series.



“And when they join their pericranies,
Out skips a book of Miscellanies.”

—*Jonathan Swift*